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Principal Succession: The "Reel" Story?

by

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"And when you have reached the mountain top,

then you shall begin to climb."

Kahlil Gibran

There will be time, there will be time…
For all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

(T. S. Eliot)

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"It really is about time!"

Abstract

In this study I used a motion picture metaphor to explore the experiences and understandings of two elementary school principals during their first year of a succession. A qualitative methodology was selected to look at each experience holistically within its particular context and data were gathered through participant observation and participative conversations. Limiting the number of participants to two, and conducting the research for the duration of one school year, allowed time for more in-depth observation at the schools, and the opportunity to become better acquainted with each principal. Three major components of filmmaking: the script, the sound and the focus were used to organize the data and to reflect on the principals' stories. These reflections revealed that both principals were focused on enhancing learning. They both worked with teachers and could identify new practices that would benefit the students. However, similar efforts by these principals resulted in very different succession experiences and these differences revealed some key understandings. They showed that context is critical; that you need to be alert and attentive at all times, skilled at reading situations and attending to relationships; that there are no guarantees that your learning will lead to success when you arrive at a school; and that in the end, you might arrive somewhere that you never anticipated. The experiences of these principals also emphasized the importance of being aware of the beliefs you truly value, of finding a path that works and a way to live with things you may not like. They showed that tough decisions could be made

without things falling apart but that your heart could be hurt in the process. The findings confirmed the complexity of the succession experience and the importance of opening up new questions about this phenomenon. The conclusion called for more stories that present accurate descriptions of the realities of school life and provide greater insight into the ways administrators think, what they think about, and how they connect their thinking to their actions.

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I. Introduction

The dramatic world of a school principal is a challenging "set" of constant activity, simultaneous events, and diverse individuals—a series of moving scenarios, in which the principal plays multiple roles. Responsible for the overall unity and focus of the school, the principal is a participant in an improvisational script, where "characters encounter one another to negotiate their relationships and their common tasks, to deal with the mystery and the contradictions and the beauty and the foolishness that make up human existence" (Starratt, 1995, p. 33). Like Edmonds (1979), I believe that effective schools require strong leadership, "without which the disparate elements of good schooling can neither be brought together nor kept together" (p. 32). Although I support the concept of shared leadership within a school, for the purposes of this document where I use the terms "principal" and "leader" interchangeably, I am referring solely to the school principal.

According to Brock and Grady (1995), practicing as a school leader today is like walking on a tightrope without a net (p. 43). Therefore Goens (1997) is convinced that only school leaders with "clear values, a sense of purpose, and a vision of a positive future" can withstand what he describes as an environment of "chaos and confusion" (p. 41). Inundated with diverse expectations from school district personnel, teachers, support staff, parents, students, and members of the school community, a school principal must contend with many conflicting moral viewpoints and complex administrative decision-making. Wolcott (1973) admits that: "if principals dream of a time when they no longer will have to face such disparate expectations as those which seem to pervade their professional lives, they do so because the dream itself affords some comfort rather than because they believe such a day could ever be a reality" (p. 296).

Principal succession, the frequent movement of principals to new schools, further complicates the mix. Hart (1993) notes that principals generally experience between six and eight leader successions in their

careers with only one of these being a first time experience (p. 249). I support Hart's contention that "a principal's succession affects all who work in and with a school," (p. 6) and I agree with William Greenfield that the "manner in which this transition is negotiated has many ramifications for the successor as well as for teachers and others" (in Hart, 1993, p. xi).

As principals move to new schools, there are new scripts, new locations, and new actors. There is movement away from stability and comfort, and the familiar becomes strange. Patterson (1993) is convinced that "letting go of the old and risking the new become[s] leap of faith" (p. 18); that "trading the known for the unknown can be more than unsettling, it can be frightening" (p. 24). Greenfield (1993) emphasizes the important differences at each school in context and culture and he cautions that success as a principal in one school is no guarantee of success in a different school, that "strategies and orientations that worked well in one circumstance may be entirely inappropriate or impossible to enact in a different school" (p. 147). Greenfield believes that a principal's ability to perform is:

> directly affected by the degree to which he or she possesses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to respond appropriately to: (1) the role-demands characterizing the school work-situation in general (the social, moral, and technical demands common to every school); and (2) the particularistic demands of the situation which vary from one school to another as a function of differences in school and community context and culture. (p. 147)

Experienced principals arrive at new schools with individual expectations, different skill levels and unique personal qualities. They enter distinct schools that are in the midst of their own continuing stories. What happens, then, "when the starting gate is opened, the flag is dropped, or the pistol is shot" (Solomon, 1995, p. 31)? According to Brock and Grady (1995), changing administrative positions can be exciting and exhilarating, as "the prospect of bringing years of experience and fresh ideas to a new setting is motivating, enticing" (p. x). Hart (1993) agrees that a change of leaders can have a positive impact if the school's overall performance is improved. She believes that "schools need their principals to become integrated into the

group, but they also need creativity and new ideas" (p. 15). Solomon (1995) contends that new leaders get a honeymoon period for change in which resistance is diminished because change is expected (p. 36). Brock and Grady warn, though, that succession can also be a frightening, perhaps even disastrous experience, if the incoming principal anticipates an enthusiastic response from staff, but is then confronted with resistance and antagonism (p. x). Hart also cautions about disastrous results, should the new principal fail to become connected and respected.

The number of principal successions continues to steadily increase. More principals are moving to new schools more often. Hart (1993) insists that succession is a topic of great importance to those who work in schools because "the effects of a new principal on the school will be felt in its structure, social interactions, and performance" (p. 87). Yet while school leadership has been studied extensively, there has been surprisingly little research on succession experiences. From the little that is written, there are few stories of experience. Given Hart and Bredeson's (1996) claim that "the interpretations teachers, parents and students place on the change and the features of the school, its needs and people's goals, hopes and aspirations (as well as the challenges) make each experience unique" (p. 151), this lack of stories is especially troubling. As principals experience new school assignments, they compose libraries of fresh stories in their minds and in their hearts. I believe that it is vitally important to continue to recognize and document this richness of experience as we piece together better mosaics for our future and "by looking to those who have paved the way, we genuinely honour them" (Patterson, 1993, p. 36).

Hart (1993) maintains that "the complexity of the leader succession process does not make the experience undecipherable" (p. 266). She believes that

> while it is important not to underestimate the complexity of the social realities with which a new principal must deal, it also is important not to underestimate the ability of people to develop skill and experience understanding and working within socially complex situations. (p. 266)

Hart and Bredeson (1996) admit that the succession phenomenon is not well understood, as "no algorithm for success exists" (p. 151). But Greenfield (1993) advises that although "no one can experience another's experience...we may come to understand it" (p. 66).

Sergiovanni (1999) is convinced that a complex framework is required in order to grasp the complexity inherent in the practice of educational administration. He suggests that the tools for reasoning about practice must be multiple and must provide many different points of view (p. 165). Hart (1993) suggests that succession research in schools has "languished, perhaps because it is time for researchers to develop more complex, interactive models of leader succession as a social process" (p. 258). The researchers whose studies Hart illuminates in her book, "created a picture of the interaction of principals and schools as an ongoing process along a complex set of continuums" (p. 241).

In this study, I have heeded Sergiovanni and Hart's pleas for the use of complexity and diversity to expand notions about the succession phenomenon. Following my intuitive belief that the succession experience is a moving picture, I have employed a motion picture metaphor to seek out new ways of understanding the experience from the perspective of the school principal. I have used composition, the interaction of people and things within the space of a particular context to help communicate meaning. Sobchack and Sobchack (1980) inform us that in filmmaking, people and things can be arranged "so randomly and spontaneously that the viewer almost forgets he is watching a film and instead feels as though he were looking through a window into the real world" (p. 34). I have essentially reversed this statement in viewing two "real world" experiences as two moving pictures of succession. Lights . . . Camera . . . Action . . . .

What are the experiences and understandings of principals who have moved from one school to another? Although this question seems

simple enough, Frye (1968) believes that the "simplest questions are not only the hardest to answer but the most important to ask" (p. 17).

The Moving Picture

Life in schools is in constant motion, and principal succession is not a static event. Continuously evolving dynamic practices affect all interactions, and this movement is not something that is easily conveyed in words. Using a motion picture metaphor has helped me to re-create some of these moving images as a means to explore the understandings of two principals during their succession experiences. Ogawa (1991) has suggested that the conventional approach to succession research in schools may have outlived its usefulness (p. 30). I believe that the application of the motion picture metaphor to this topic stimulates a degree of creative and imaginative thinking that helps to make sense of and contributes to a deeper understanding of the experience.

Bateson (1994) contends that "our species thinks in metaphor and learns through stories" (p. 11). Geiger (1981) explains that when we create or use a metaphor, we put three universes of discourse to work: the metaphorical universe (the universe from which we borrow our words, things, and relationships; the contextual universe (the universe in which the metaphor is being used; and the all-encompassing universe that gives the metaphorical and contextual universes their meaning (p. 5). In Greek, metaphor means to carry something across, to transfer something from one category to another (Geiger, 1981, p. 2) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980) believe that the primary function of metaphor is "to provide a partial understanding of one kind of experience in terms of another kind of experience" (p. 154). As Emerson states:

> when some familiar truth or fact appears in a new dress, mounted as on a fine horse, equipped with a grand pair of ballooning wings, we cannot enough testify our surprise and pleasure. It is like the new virtue in some unprized old property. (cited in Bartel, 1983, p. 3)

Metaphors are part of the language of researchers. The school principal has emerged, over the years, as a gardener, fireman, policeman, priest, guide, construction foreman, builder, instructional leader, cheerleader,

nurse, coach, parent, friend, financial planner, accountant, systems analyst, motivator, manager, ship's captain, dream keeper, juggler, paratrooper, caretaker, culture builder, reinforcer, and more. Bredeson (1988a) claims that metaphor is a "rich and powerfully evocative language" that is at the "very heart of organizational leadership" (cited in Hart & Bredeson, 1996, p. 136). Hart and Bredeson (1996) highlight the use of leadership metaphors by Senge (1990), Deal and Peterson (1994), and Sergiovanni (1987), to transfer "characteristics and qualities from phenomena and concepts we know well to those we know less well" (p.136).

References to isolated components of filmmaking have already surfaced in the leadership and effective schools literature (italics have been added for emphasis). Hart and Bredeson (1996) suggest that researchers "look at leadership through multiple *lenses* focusing less on conceptual problems and more on the heuristic possibilities various lenses offer" (p. 136). Deal and Peterson (1999) maintain that "ritual and ceremony are to culture what *the movie is to the script*" (p. 31). Hart (1986) claims that "the literature on the school principalship has long recognized that principals occupy many *roles*" (p. 233) and she confirms that principals can select from "a dizzying array" of possibilities. Hart also classifies principals as *role makers* when they actively choose to "emphasize some roles while minimizing others." She contends that "context, culture, and situational demands influence the roles principals play" and that becoming a principal is a "*process of role development*" (p. 223). Ten years later, Hart and Bredeson (1996) extend this principal as actor metaphor by moving beyond role choice to reflect on the performance aspect. They see some roles as scripted while others are improvisational, and they believe that "it is the *principal's performance* in these *scenes* that reveals to observers key values, beliefs, and meanings in the school" (p. 140). Hart and Bredeson conclude that although dialogue is important, "everyone watches what the *principal as actor* does" (p. 140). They support their position by citing other researchers who think similarly. Senge (1990) characterizes the principal's various roles as designer, teacher and

steward. The principal, as an organizational designer, helps "to formulate, articulate, and nurture the governing ideas, images, purposes and values that have enduring influence on the school" (Hart & Bredeson, 1996, p. 13). A teacher-leader helps everyone in the organization "to gain more insightful views of current reality" and "to see new possibilities for shaping the future" (p. 13). In the role of steward, the principal is a servant to the larger purposes and mission of the school, as well as attending to what's best for students and teachers. Deal and Peterson (1990), in their delineation of symbolic leadership roles, include the *principal as actor*, symbol, potter, poet, and healer. Evers and Lakomski (1999) employ the language of film as they "*develop*" their perspective on educational administration and training, emphasizing the reciprocal interrelationships between organizational "*actors*." Clandinin (1990) writes that school is a "place is where the *action* occurs, where *characters are formed* and live out their *stories* and where cultural and social context play constraining and enabling roles" (p. 8). Deal (1999) describes school leaders as actors, and characterizes aspects of school life as comedy, tragedy, drama or action, noting "the various stages of activity in the school cross all forms of theatre" (p. 97).

Hart and Bredeson (1996) are convinced that metaphors are at the heart of how principals practice leadership. In the movie, Witness, filmgoers watching the barn-raising scenes where an undercover police agent becomes part of an Amish community, can gain an understanding of systemic change. In their book on restructuring, Valdez Perez, Milstein, Wood and Jacquez (1999) cite Conley's (1997) belief that "restructuring is not primarily the process of establishing new programs, but of developing a new picture . . . of what schooling should look like and what educators should be attempting to achieve (p. 5). Ogawa (1991) perceives an "absence of drama" associated with the replacement of principals that has led researchers to overlook the succession experience as a subject worthy of study (p. 30).

Metaphors have played an important part in contributing to our understanding of the principal's role. In addition to improved understanding,

Morgan (1997) contends that "the metaphors and ideas through which we 'see' and 'read' situations influence how we act" (p. 350). Yet there is also a danger associated with their use. Words have a way of bewitching us, forcing us to become prisoners to one way of thinking. When "we think of things as up or down, for example, so habitually," Frye (1968) warns, "we often forget they're just metaphors" (p. 126). Morgan (1980) stresses that metaphors are based on partial truths in which certain features are emphasized and others suppressed (p. 611). Thus, he claims "ways of seeing become ways of not seeing" (p. 217). This is a risk that I considered when choosing to use the motion picture metaphor. But it is a risk that I felt comfortable taking in order to encourage readers to envision new mental models as they consider how the components within a system interact.

Davidson (1979) claims that "metaphor is the dreamwork of language, and like all dreamwork, its interpretation reflects as much on the interpreted as on the originator (p. 29). Personally, I relate to metaphors because they help me to understand abstract concepts on an experiential level. And movies have a particular allure for me. My fascination with film began the year I returned to University to study theatre. The decision to return to school was based on my experiences teaching elementary school students and my personal interest in the arts. As a young teacher, I found that I was consistently drawing on my experience in music and drama to enhance my teaching in the curricular areas and to connect the learning for my students. My own training had included piano lessons and performances in school choirs and musical theatre productions. While teaching, I continued to perform with a group of "community singers and players," whose director also organized the music program for my school district. Mr. H. proved to be a supportive mentor for my extensive use of music and creative drama in the classroom. The excitement and progress of my students convinced me that these creative approaches were effective ways to provide students with additional avenues for active discovery and for expressing their learning. One particularly popular and successful example was the use of the puppet

theatre, which I had originally designed to develop verbal skills, oral communication and creative writing. The children acted out their own plays, using saw-dust hand puppets that they had constructed during Art classes. I discovered that the children often used topics from other curricular areas as material for their plays, thereby independently re-inforcing their own learning. I decided that this approach to instruction had considerable merit and that furthering my skills in music and drama could improve my teaching.

Under the tutelage of two highly knowledgeable and inspiring professors, I developed a talent and love for directing and stage design. During this time, I assisted the head of the theatre department in the direction of Shakespeare's As You Like It. I was also selected to independently direct their children's theatre presentation, with fellow theatre students as actors, set and light designers, and stage crew. The performance was of a fable that I had collaboratively re-written as a musical and the production incorporated innovative techniques to educate children about the theatrical process as well as to entertain them with the content. The show was well received by children, parents, teachers, and critics.

My participation in the world of theatre was consuming and exhausting and my husband was experiencing the same effects with his course of study. We eventually fell into the habit of attending movies on a fairly regular basis as an opportunity to relax and spend time together. Hidden in the dark shadows and slouched in soft velvet chairs, we were distanced from our everyday distractions and free to lose ourselves in other worlds, energized by the images on the big screen. The movies I liked best were stories that engaged me both intellectually and emotionally, propelling me from the dark recesses of the theatre with an overwhelming desire to discuss issues, themes, characters, direction and design. Often, the conversations would continue on into the next day. Movies had gone beyond the capacity to entertain. They had become a powerful learning tool. Conveying information, introducing ideas helped us to explore relevant social issues, and provided insight into how people thought, acted, and dreamed. As Fulford (1999)

declares: "film and its cousin in the field of moving images—television—dominate our lives. They have affected how we think about ourselves, how we filter our reality and how we dream" (p. 126).

There are many similarities between motion pictures and principal successions. Today, attending movies is a universal event, familiar in all cultures and new movies are continually being produced. Principal succession is a frequent occurrence in schools everywhere and training new leaders is an ongoing process. As the words "movie" and "motion picture" suggest, there is movement in film, and principal succession is about movement. Movie making and the principalship are both complex endeavors that involve many people who rely on each other's efforts, talents and abilities. Films are viewed, examined, dissected, analyzed, studied, and written about by many people. The research on school leadership is extensive. The script for a movie is usually pre-written, but does not reveal how the characters and plot come to life. Improvisation is key and how the actors actually play their parts will determine the overall success of the film. Similarly, much educational research is prescriptive in nature.

The hierarchy of film production has an uncanny resemblance to that of a school system. In order to be successful, motion pictures, like schools, need broad public support and they attempt to appeal to as many people as possible regardless of their economic, educational or social background. Film writers and directors are frequently torn between realizing their artistic or political vision and producing a "product" that studios know how to market and audiences find familiar enough to buy. Sound familiar?

Movies transport us to other worlds. Sometimes the new worlds that principals find themselves inhabiting are very different from the ones they had imagined or desired. Each school, like each movie has a new location, a new script and a unique mix of characters. The reputation of a film, along with its critical ratings, precede its opening and news about the success or failure of a movie spreads quickly during its showing. Veteran principals' reputations usually arrive at their new schools before them, and the judging of their

performances begins immediately. Often in films, one actor plays multiple parts, just as principals in schools take on many roles. Movies are vehicles that present a particular view of the world. Veteran principals arrive at new schools having already developed their personal sets of beliefs. Films show as well as tell their stories, with action being equal to if not more important than words. Principals also "show" as well as tell, in their actions, facial expressions and body language.

Movies tell stories; principals tell stories; and stories, whether personal or fictional, provide meaning to our lives, and engage all of our senses as we interact in dramas, comedies, mysteries and intrigues. Ely et al. (1997) claim that we have been "thinking of qualitative research writing as still photography for too long" (p. 52). They appeal for innovative ways "of showing, of moving the plot ahead, of juxtaposing events, characters, and sequences" (p. 52). The succession experience is part of an evolving process of school, which I perceive as a true moving picture. Therefore I employ a motion picture metaphor to explain the research process as well as my interpretation of the succession experience.

Directing the Research

Since the release of the blockbuster movie, *Titanic*, people have crowded into movie theaters all around the world to share the particular events surrounding this horrific tragedy. It was the film's director who was responsible for organizing the movie's technical and artistic resources in the best way possible. To that end, the director made decisions about, and was involved in all of the filmmaking processes: the acting, the script writing, the filming, the lighting, the design techniques and the editing. Similarly, as director of this research, I have designed and implemented this study. I chose the topic to explore, the participants to approach, and the methodology. Throughout the course of data collection, I was making continuous decisions

about when to visit the schools, how long to stay, what to attend to, and when to participate.

The "true" facts that were presented to audiences about the Titanic tragedy were those that had been selected in advance by the movie's director. Greenfield (1993) claims that because these facts are closely interwoven with values, it is actually "we who decide about the facts" (p. 159). So even the most realistic movies show only the filmmaker's view of reality. The "truth" of the Titanic tragedy is therefore revealed to audiences through the director's perspective. To assist the director in this conveyance, a movie camera and its lenses are used to focus vision and adjust angles. Thus, the director gains the ability to magnify, reduce, angle, blur, fade, reverse, fast forward, slant or distort the facts. Members of the audience, while viewing the event as it unfolds on the big screen, adjust their personal lenses according to their own previously held realities and values (Solomon, 1995, p. 42). Bateson contends that "all views of the world are acquired, and learning a way of seeing the world offers both insight and blindness, usually at the same time" (1994, p. 91). The facts, then, that the director has decided to show the audience influences what the audience doesn't see and hear, and thus opens up the possibility of deception.

In my role as director of this research, I decided what to look at, how closely and for how long. These decisions gave me the unique power to guide the readers' attention from one part of the data to another, stressing what I considered important and ignoring what I considered extraneous. Invariably, then, this study reflects my own interests and biases. Yet at the same time, I believe that this recognition helps everyone to gain a fuller understanding of the lived succession experiences at each of the schools. Edel (1984) compares this seeking of deeper truths in research to one's ability to "grasp what lies on the underside of the given tapestry" (p. 292). My involvement in all of the facets of this research has permitted me to do this.

Introspective throughout, I challenged myself to constantly reassess my own position and values against that which I was observing, while

questioning the possibility of omission. Was I being allowed to see only one side of the experience? What were my participants choosing to display and what parts were being edited out and why? Edel believes that a constant struggle is waged between the concealed self and the revealed self, the public self and the private. As the research director, which threads of data did I choose to weave into my finished story? Which knots did I reveal and why? Did I tie off some ends or continue to weave them through? The visibility of both process and product in this final document allows for the research tapestry to be turned over, and for this dimensionality to elicit deeper meanings.

II. A Maze of Scripts

Not too long ago, on a beautiful summer day, I accidentally discovered an outdoor maze. Venturing inside, it seemed almost "like being shut out of the world in some fairy place" (Hodgson-Burnett, 1988, p. 70), as if I had walked into the middle of a movie set. There were thick grass paths going in every direction and beautiful alcoves of evergreen with intricately carved stone seats. As I delighted in exploring this magical place, I followed Yogi Berra's advice: "when you come to a fork in the road, take it" (Goens, 1997, p. 42). I enjoyed these explorations thoroughly until I began to develop a gnawing fear of becoming lost and unable to find a way out. My excursions into the research for this study reminded me of my past journey through the labyrinth. Although I devoted much time to exploring the many diverse paths through this maze of data, it eventually became necessary for me to discern which ideas would have the most relevance to this study. As the producer of this research, I have chosen to focus the theoretical lens on an examination of the following key topics: expectations for schools and school leaders, school culture and change. I present this next section as a set of 'blueprints'— scripts that have already been written on pertinent topics and that have helped me to develop a framework within which to approach the issues surrounding principal succession.

The 'Good' School

To begin with, the study of school leadership is directly tied to the profusion of ideas about what constitutes a 'good' school. It is Sinclair and Ghory's (1997) belief that the intent to create good schools for all young people has been implicit throughout time. The search for the ideal school began in the early 19th century with the "common schools," that were based on Jefferson's democratic notions of an educated citizenry. The quest continued with the "efficient schools" of the 1920s, the "non-graded schools" of the 1960s, the "Paideia" and "accelerated" schools of the 1980s, and the

"essential schools" of the 1990s. (p. 85). Each new search was guided by a dream to improve the learning environment for all students. Those dreams continue today—converging, intersecting, and diverging, to reveal an apparent lack of common vision as to what schools are really meant to achieve.

For Barth (1990), a good school is "a place where everyone is teaching and everyone is learning—simultaneously, under the same roof" (p. 162). In this community of learners, Barth believes that the principal is "the head learner engaging in, displaying, and modeling the behavior we expect and hope teachers and students will adopt" (p. 162). Hodgkinson (1991) presents his desire for a more congenial school, which will capture the essence of a family, and will be characterized by a tolerance and an acceptance of diversity (p. 61). In a somewhat similar vein, Starratt (1995) imagines principals and teachers working together as a team with families to respond to the needs of the children. Sarason (1993) wishes for schools that support life-long learning. He emphasizes his belief that the most important goal of education is "to support the desire to learn as much as one can about one's self and one's world" (p. 50). For Sinclair and Ghory (1997), the good school is an Equality School, where the spirit as well as the mind is nurtured and challenged, where the unique nature of each child and every learning situation is respected and where all children feel safe, protected and accepted. Similarly, Goodlad considers the fundamental role of our schools to be "the development of the full potential of each individual" (cited in Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 22). Sergiovanni (1996) is convinced that quality schooling happens through shared values and by promoting empowerment, enablement, and enhancement (p. 116).

These personal visions of what constitute a good school derive, according to Glasser (1990), form a "picture album" in our minds—an album that is based on our past experiences and used to explain the present world and guide our behavior (cited in Lilyquist, 1998, p. 12). Senge (1994) describes these individual visions as "mental models." He writes that "mental

models are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action" (p. 8). Senge maintains that we can only be open to the influence of others if our own mental models are brought to the surface and exposed.

These individual picture albums or mental models have undoubtedly been influenced over the years by the plethora of research on "effective" schools. Lilyquist (1998) cites recent studies completed by Purkey and Smith (1985), Cohn and Rossmiller (1987), Lezotte (1987), Mohd Nor (1989) and Hmaidan (1991), that delineate a set of characteristics common to what they consider to be effective schools (p. 171):

- Effective schools exist as safe, orderly environments where students learn without fear of harm, in a businesslike climate, and all staff members believe they are always responsible for students while on duty at work.
- Effective schools offer opportunities for students to spend their time in learning activities based on an organized curriculum.
- Effective schools have principals who communicate a clear mission of the school constantly and consistently and involve the teachers in the decision-making.
- The school's climate is generally positive, and reflects high expectations for student success.
- Teachers in effective schools feel responsible for student learning, and frequently monitor student progress.
- Effective schools enjoy a high degree of parental and community involvement in deciding the school's mission.

For Sergiovanni (1991), the major characteristics of an effective school include: being student-centered, offering academically rich programs, providing instruction that promotes student learning, having a positive school climate, fostering collegial interaction, having extensive staff development, practicing shared leadership, and involving parents and the community (p. 89-

90). Sergiovanni believes that an effective school is one that consistently and "convincingly communicates its viability and effectiveness to its school community and other important groups" (p. 86).

Wideen (1994), however, adds a practical consideration to the effective school research. He claims that "identifying the characteristics of an effective school is one thing, putting them into practice quite another" (p. 21). Wideen believes that "even when we can state with some assurance what an effective school looks like, we are still faced with the problem of how a school becomes effective" (p. 21).

The "Good" School Principal

To this end, the school principal is identified consistently in the literature as being critical to a school's success. Studies demonstrate that wherever there is an effective school, there is an outstanding principal. However, our understandings about what constitutes an effective school leader have not remained static. They are continuously growing and changing to correspond with increasing knowledge about teaching and learning and new dreams for better schools.

The bulk of the leadership research in the 1970s and 80s contributes to our knowledge of the impact of a leader's personal characteristics and behaviours, as well as situational variables. Studies during this period also distinguish between leaders and managers and introduce the ideas of vision and shared vision into the mix. Lunenburg (1995) declares that the most important conclusion from leadership theory is that the leader's traits, skills and behaviours, along with various situational factors, interact together to ultimately determine a leader's effectiveness (p. 112). Fiedler (1996) concurs with Lunenburg, stating that leadership is a highly complex interaction between an individual and the social and task environment (p. 243).

Bennis and Nanus, from their 1985 study of ninety top leaders, conclude that effective leaders set high standards and employ five key

skills: the ability to accept people as they are; the capacity to approach relationships and problems in terms of the present rather than the past; the ability to treat those who are close to them with the same courteous attention that they would extend to strangers and casual acquaintances; the ability to trust others even if the risk is great; and the ability to do so without constant approval and recognition from others (p. 66).

Along with their own performances, principals are accountable for the performances of teachers, the achievements of students and the involvement of parents and community. Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie and Hurwitz (1984) state that principals are sandwiched between the school board and the school community, the superintendent and the teaching staff, in a traditional hierarchical pyramid where "authority radiates downward from a centralized apex of power to a distributed base of responsibility in the neighbourhood schools" (p. 141). There are a multitude of fixed rules and standardized procedures in school systems that place constraints on a principal's ability to provide leadership in the school. Gross and Herriott identify some of these constraints as: the willingness of the principal's immediate superior to go to bat for the principal; the degree to which the principal is personally able to select the school's staff; the nature of the school system's reward structure, and specifically whether managerial initiative is really valued and rewarded by the larger organization (cited by Morris et al., 1984, p. 145). Additional constraints and influences are recorded by McPherson, Salley, and Baehr as: institutional, collegial and community factors, as well as the size of the school system, the size of the school, and the number of grade levels (cited by Morris et al., 1984, p. 145).

A few years later, Smith and Andrews (1989) drew attention to the role, expectancy and adaptive-reactive theories that they believe support their belief that circumstances shape leader behaviour. They cite role theorists (Kahn & Rosenthal, 1964; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1975), who suggest that a principal's behaviour is shaped by perceptions of how the superintendent, other principals, teachers, students and parents want them

to behave. They refer to Nebecker and Mitchell's (1974) expectancy theory that proposes that principals choose a course of action that they expect will have the desired results. Smith and Andrews also cite adaptive-reactive theorists, Osborne and Hunt (1975), who state that principals adapt to structure, size and external environment variables and that they react to teacher attitudes and traits.

Mendez-Morse (1992, pp. 1-16) synthesizes the research on leadership vision by pointing to studies by Blumberg and Greenfield (1980), Leithwood and Montgomery (1984), Pejza (1985), Manasse (1986), Mazarella and Grundy (1989), De Pree (1989), Westley and Mintzberg (1989) and Bennis (1990). These studies support the view that vision provides guidance and direction for staff, students and administration and according to Manasse (1986) is "the force which molds meaning for the people of an organization" (p. 150). She further states that vision includes "the development, transmission, and implementation of an image of a desirable future" (p. 150). Pejza (1985) believes that "without a vision to challenge followers with, there's no possibility of a principal being a leader" (p. 10). There is general agreement in the literature, though, that "vision comes alive only when it is shared" (Westley & Mintzberg, 1989, p. 21).

As we move into the 1990s, importance is placed on how principals' values and beliefs influence their vision and behaviours. Hodgkinson (1991) maintains that great schools are, "in infinitely subtle and complex ways, the reflection and manifestation of the moral integrity of their leaders" (p. 129). Tate (in Crosby, 1996) believes that leadership should touch the heart and soul. He claims that true leaders do not depend on their titles for success, but on the choices they make and the values they hold. Tate is convinced that "quality leadership originates largely from within and from the relationships with others in the organization that the leader takes the time to nurture" (p. xiii). Goens (1998) declares that school leadership is not about "power, roles, policy or procedure, but rather, commitment, energy, spirit, and imagination" (p. 42).

Sergiovanni (1990) favours principals who talk openly and frequently about their beliefs and commitments, their hopes and dreams, their values and ideals. He claims that principals have a responsibility to begin the dialogue about what the school stands for, believes in, and its future direction (p. 57). Brock and Grady (1995) believe that "effective leaders behave consistently with their values" (p. 8). West (1993) believes in the necessity for school leaders to have confidence in their own beliefs and not to be afraid to persuade others, if possible, of the importance of those beliefs. West emphasizes that a well-thought-out philosophy and values "are probably the most important force in our increasingly atomized, individualistic and dislocated society" (p. 45). West agrees with Marquand (1988) that consensus is not easy in any circumstances, but today, "it is more likely to come through power sharing and negotiation than any other way" (p. 45). Patterson (1993) senses a shift away from the individual toward interaction patterns among individuals. He claims that a person, who is visionary, charismatic, organized, and a good listener, is not necessarily going to be a successful future leader. Yet Sinclair and Ghory (1997) see a need for more imagination and inspiration, more personal insight and initiative.

Current research emphasizes the power of collaboration, shared inquiry, collective decision-making and problem solving. In our present schools, restructuring and site-based management have promoted the need for a more collaborative school culture with increased teacher participation and leadership in the decision-making processes. According to Bloom (1999), today's school leaders "are expected to coordinate, nurture, and lead highly diverse student, staff and community groups . . . in a climate that is increasingly politicized and driven by the call for accountability" (p. 14).

Telford (1996) also acknowledges the "multiplicity of complex educational demands being placed at the feet of teachers and administrators" (p. 1). He cautions that "leaders need to be aware of who they are themselves *as people first*—what values they hold dear, what motivates them in their life's choices and priorities, and how they will respond to given sets of

circumstances" (p. 130). Telford expects principals to embody and promote the qualities and behaviours they expect of others.

Starratt (1995) believes that future leaders will have to be much more concerned with supporting the work of teachers, creating and working within networks, and nurturing organic organizational patterns. He calls for a new kind of intellectual and political leadership among principals, those who will be able to shape schools that are "responsive to the emerging needs of the community and of the larger society" (p. 3). Starratt says that principals "will have to spend more time probing their deepest convictions about the education of children and youth, and about the central human values involved in that education" (p. 8). He supports a leadership of substance, of ideas, of vision, and of commitment to deeply held human values.

From her own experience, Hicks (1996) contends that the principal's role is "one of stepping back to reconcile competing interests" (p. 6). She sees the key to survival as "detachment from the various systems in the school community and the realization that some people will never see the big picture" (p. 6). Hicks agrees that such detachment sounds contradictory in an era of site-based management, but she is convinced that "it is necessary for the principal to give up control in order to empower teachers" (p. 6).

Lambert (1998) believes that school leadership needs to be separated from person, role, and a set of individual behaviours, and embedded in the school community as a whole. She emphasizes a broader concept of leadership, one of learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively. Lambert claims that this concept generates energy and purpose, which in turn engages and draws others into the work of leadership.

Garubo and Rothstein (1998) have established, as their priority for principals, "the creation of a good organizational climate that encourages cooperation and trusting associations between people" (p. 65). They claim that because "situations demanding interpersonal skills abound in the public schools" (p. 65), principals must pay careful attention to leadership style and

how people respond to one another. Garubo and Rothstein suggest a series of vital questions for principals to ask:

> How personal are people willing to be in their associations with others? Does anxiety or trust dominate the way people communicate? How well do teachers and administrators listen and respond to each other? How willing are they to help when things are difficult? And, finally, how effectively do teachers and administrators resolve the conflicts and problems that arise in their working relationships? (p. 65)

Garubo and Rothstein strongly support a democratic leadership approach that doesn't force everyone into the same mold. They encourage principals to convey a message of understanding and acceptance so that others will be able to talk about their thoughts and feelings truthfully. They also believe that: "knowing oneself is the first step in getting to know others" and to know oneself "requires self-understanding and self-respect" (p. 68).

Murphy (1998) contends that the boundaries are blurring between home and school, and school and community as parents become more active participants in the education of their children. He sees the necessity for principals to act as organizational and social architects in order to contend with the shifting context in which schools must function and the changing social fabric. Murphy believes that principals must become even more committed to teaching and learning, making knowledge of instruction and curriculum a priority, while recognizing the moral dimensions of their work (p. 16). Recognizing instructional leadership as the major role for elementary school principals, Murphy declares that future principals will need "a combination of better preparation, visionary insight into what schools can and should become, the ability to influence others to share that vision, and realistic expectations of what he or she is able to accomplish" (p. 14).

Consistent with Murphy's pronouncement, Blase and Blase (1998) have concentrated their recent research on instructional leadership, basing their work on two broad premises. The first premise is that spoken language has a powerful impact on teachers' instructional behaviour, and the second

principle is that facilitative and supportive actions by principals as instructional leaders have powerful effects on classroom instruction. Blase and Blase believe that good instructional leaders demonstrate harmonizing, valuing, enabling, and modeling. "Modeling was in fact viewed as an impressive example of instructional leadership, one that yielded very positive effects on teacher reflection and reflectively informed behaviour" (p. 40). They have also found that good instructional leaders: listen before making suggestions; make suggestions in such a way as to extend, broaden or enrich teachers' thinking and strengths; share their own professional experiences to encourage teacher reflection; make indirect suggestions for improvement of teaching through examples and demonstrations; give teachers discretion or choice to accept or reject their suggestions; sometimes support instructional changes that contradict current policy; support suggestions from teachers by encouraging them to take risks to improve instruction; indirectly enhance suggestions by distributing literature on effective instruction; give their suggestions in face-to-face interactions, but also in writing which is regularly accompanied by praise for a teacher's strengths and accomplishments; and work to create a culture of instructional improvement.

To truly be an instructional leader, Frase, Downey and Canciamilla (1999) believe that principals must practice MBWA, management by wandering around. MBWA is a highly visible leadership approach that positions principals regularly in classrooms, coaching and conferencing with teachers on curriculum and instruction related issues. Frase, Downey and Canciamilla contend that "if we want high student achievement, and who does not, principals must spend more time wandering into classrooms, looking and listening for improved ways to do things—wandering with a purpose" (p. 37). They identify four behaviours practiced by MBWA principals that directly relate to student achievement and school success. MBWA principals regularly "conduct classroom walkthroughs; observe and work in classrooms; participate with teachers in discussions and problem-solving regarding

curriculum and instruction; and give constructive feedback to teachers regarding curriculum alignment and instructional practices" (p. 37).

As well, the research on leadership attributes and effective leadership continues but with less of a static quality. Gross (1998) identifies ten qualities shared by effective leaders: experienced but still growing, centered on students and families, willing to experiment but not reckless, highly engaged but not overwhelmed, trusting but not naïve, powerful but not overbearing, visible but quiet, dignified but informal, demanding but understanding, and highly ambitious—but for their group, not necessarily individually. Woods and Bighouse (1999) list their findings on the essential characteristics of successful leadership: a consistent set of values; certain qualities like optimism, cheerfulness and enthusiasm, although by no means a universal set, and competence in a few activities such as delegation, time management and the management of change (p. 66). Morris (1999) adds his belief that patience, perseverance and skill are the keys to bringing everyone to a new consensus.

Ramsay (1999) joins the manager-leader debate, claiming that "to successfully manage today's schools takes what it has always taken: hard work; dedication; some knowledge of subject matter, learning theory and child development; and basic people skills" (p. 8). He believes, however, that to successfully lead today's schools requires even more. Ramsay lists thirty of these qualities, which he claims can be taught, nurtured and sharpened. He insists, though, that "the biggest distinction between effective leaders and also-rans, wannabes, or run-of-the-mill managers is passion" and passion, he fears, "may have to be inborn" (p. 8).

Given the enormous amounts of research on leadership and the hundreds of proposed definitions, it seems incredible that there is still no clear consensus about it. It appears that the more we know on the subject, the more mysterious it becomes. Lambert (1998) applauds this notion, claiming that having no consensus is advantageous because it leaves the concept open for discussion. Like Ramsay, Lambert believes that the role of a

principal today is even more important than ever because "the work is much more complex than we thought it was," and "it demands a more sophisticated set of skills and understandings." She stresses the fact that "it is more difficult to build leadership capacity than to tell colleagues what to do" and that "it is more difficult to be full partners with other adults engaged in hard work than to evaluate and supervise subordinates" (p. 24).

School Culture

Further to Smith and Andrews' (1989) claim that "there has been far more research on the consequences of leader behaviour than on the determinants of a leader's behaviour" and that our understanding has been "constrained by a prevailing view that leaders shape organizations, not that organizations shape leaders," (p. 5), Dean's (1999) extensive review of the research on school culture is welcome. Defining culture as a sense of "this is the way we do things here," Dean cites studies by Delamont (1987) and Pollard (1985) who refer to culture as "institutional bias." Delamont also notes the influence of staff room culture and Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis and Ecob (1988) the importance of expectation. Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989) list aspects of school culture as: the philosophy endorsed by leaders and members and how this philosophy translates into action; the values of leaders and others; the nature and quality of personal and interpersonal actions and interactions; the metaphors which frame thoughts and actions; and the motivating sagas, myths, stories and celebrations. Factors contributing to the creation of a school culture are delineated by Nias, Southworth and Campbell (1989) and include: the school buildings and organizational arrangements, the school's history, as well as the people and their histories (p.16).

Deal and Peterson (1999) believe that "cultural patterns and traditions evolve over time," that they begin when a school is founded and are "thereafter shaped by critical incidents, forged through controversy and

conflict, and crystallized through triumph and tragedy" (p. 49). They are convinced that culture is stable and persistent across time but that the climate of a school changes in response to immediate events. Deal and Peterson claim that to be effective, school leaders must inquire below the surface to form a deeper understanding of their school and community culture. They suggest employing all of the senses while observing, sensing, listening and interpreting. Deal and Peterson emphasize that "leaders must listen to the echoes of school history" as well as "the deeper dreams and hopes the school community holds for the future" (p. 86).

Blase and Kirby (1992) acknowledge the impact of context-specific characteristics in determining appropriate leadership practices within a particular school (p. 114). Lunenburg (1995) agrees that each school has its own "distinct structure, goals, norms boundaries, and internal systems," as well as a "relatively enduring pattern of interaction among those within the organization, the external environment and relationships to it" (p. 3).

When a school is working well, Telford (1996) explains:

> it sort of buzzes along, at a rattling pace, breathing a life's energy of its own which plays out the hopes, the dreams and the expectations of its inhabitants. Such a school is a place of action, of drama, of politics and of morality. (p. 1)

But Telford also admits that "knowing about it is one thing, and doing it yourself is another" (p. 130).

I think it is significant to note here the specific ways that Ramsay (1999) sees school leadership as being more difficult and complex than leadership in most other fields:

- School leaders head up organizations with no clear and consistent mission.
- School leaders contend with chronic uncertainty about funding and often have little or no control over their sources of funding.
- School leaders don't always know who their customers are (students? parents? taxpayers?).

- School leaders have no quality control over their raw materials (students). They have to take whatever the parents send them.
- School leaders have to make daily decisions in the midst of all the constituencies involved. They function in a fish bowl. Many work under stringent "open meeting laws." Being a school leader means operating in a constant crossfire without the luxury of being able to distance yourself in order to make a more objective decision.
- School leaders exercise a wider span of control, play to more diverse audiences, and serve a broader range of constituencies than do most leaders in the private sector.
- School leaders work for results that are not always readily measured. For school leaders, the payoff is often years away.
- The decisions made by school leaders affect more segments of the community than do their counterparts in most other fields.
- School leaders work in a highly politicized environment and report to a politically elected board of directors.
- School leaders have to be accountable to more "bosses" than most leaders in the private sector.
- School leaders are expected to perform both the leadership and management functions, unlike leaders in many other fields.
- School leaders work in a field where all feel they are experts.

Principal Succession

The continuous movement of principals to new schools adds yet another layer to this complexity. Brock and Grady (1995), two principals who have had succession experiences, agree that the experience is characterized by wonderful possibilities if a principal finds the perfect job, but the move can cause immense grief if principals encounter issues they are unprepared for or asked to do things which conflict with their beliefs. Given the substantial evidence in the literature of a principal's influence on a school, I find it very

surprising that studies of succession are scant. The existing research on succession has been approached in a number of different ways: from a socialization perspective, using stage frameworks, and understanding organizational change.

Lunenburg (1995) describes a school as a social system, "characterized by relatively enduring interaction patterns that link people to people and people to jobs as they pursue school goals" (p. 3). For Merton, Reader and Kendall (Hart, 1993), socialization is simply the "learning of social roles," involving individuals' adjustments and adaptations to the expectations of a group (p. 10). Similarly, Van Maanen (Smith & Turner, 1995) interprets socialization as "the manner in which the experiences of people learning the ropes of a new organizational position, status, or role are structured for them by others" (p.162). For Greenfield (1985), the succession experience is "an interactive process through which one is integrated into membership in the organization," (cited in Hart, 1993, p. xi) influenced by the culture of the school, the role relationships and the day-to-day work activities. As the socialization process unfolds in school settings, Greenfield feels that "an administrator undergoes a group membership boundary passage resulting in varying degrees of acceptance and legitimacy by the school's faculty (and others)" (p. xi).

Brock and Grady (1995) claim that there is an expectation for a new principal to learn the culture of the school and become an integral member of the organization. Smith and Turner (1995) perceive socialization to be the central process through which group culture is passed on to new members and that different socialization patterns are at work within the student, teacher, and administrator subcultures, as well as in the school culture as a whole (p. 162). Principals are advised to expect the socialization process to be "lonely, individual, informal, and random" (Brock & Grady, 1995, p. 23). Hart (1993) believes that "school and community members' perceptions that new principals don't fit may lead to their isolation" (p. 35). But Smith and Turner (1995) contend that the amount of choice principals feel they've had in

the change decision and/or their prior expectations can contribute to their own feelings of isolation. "Differences between anticipations and experiences (including unmet expectations) become apparent and contribute to reality shock" (Louis, cited in Smith and Turner, 1995, p. 163).

Hart's (1993) extensive research draws from the literature on organizational socialization, which she believes can provide a useful theoretical perspective for understanding the interaction between principals and schools during succession. Hart suggests that successors, although in legitimate positions of authority in the school structure, are still new members of a group and are therefore subject to the same social forces that shape people who join established social groups. Hart identifies four factors that she believes are applicable to principal succession research: (a) tactics used in the socialization process; (b) socialization stages through which new members pass; (c) the personal and social contexts that shape the entire process; and (d) the outcomes or effects of socialization practices likely to result from these factors (p. 21). Hart is convinced that the addition of organizational socialization factors to the study of succession will advance understanding and practice in three ways: (a) by identifying organizational circumstances when the decision to change leaders might be advantageous; (b) by understanding the social dynamics of succession across time; and (c) by examining the interaction effects of groups and individuals on succession outcomes (p. 15).

For a new principal, the degree of conformity is problematic. Although schools "need their new principals to become integrated into the group, they also need creativity and new ideas" (Hart, 1993, p. 15). Hart believes that "when the school's power to shape the principal is overemphasized, the creative input of the new principal suffers" (p. 266). This dampening effect, Hart claims, can result in failure. She points to the two extremes (from total internalization to alienation) as another reason to better understand "the relationship between uniqueness and continuity in leader succession experiences" (p. 19). Brock and Grady (1995) also recognize this difficulty

and agree that: "too much conformity to the existing culture may negate your impact as a leader. Yet lack of social acceptance may impede any improvements or innovations you attempt" (p. 23). Sarason (1993) warns about simply becoming what others want you to become. He claims that there is really no harm in this, except when the process "has the effect of *disconnecting* an individual's personal goals and values from those of the organization" (p. 29). Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins envision the ideal solution—a socialization process which "positions one at the point of sharpest focus: not so close as to render the corporate image a fuzzy blur; nor so far away as to make the detailed features of the image unrecognizable" (cited in Hart, 1993, p. 10).

Cosgrove (1986) claims that many teachers hold the opinion that new principals make no difference. Teachers say that: "principals come and principals go, but we'll still be here" (cited in Hart & Bredeson, 1996, p. 150). From her studies, Cosgrove reports very negative effects when a principal delayed too long in making changes he felt were warranted. She concludes that teachers greatly influence the effects of principal succession. Lilyquist (1998) cites three main factors which were found to affect teachers' attitudes toward any organizational change: (a) modifications to a teacher's rank in the social structure, (b) restrictions that block teachers from gaining status or place them at risk of losing status, and (c) concepts that contradict the teacher's vision of a good classroom. As Miskel and Cosgrove (1985) explain, "the most critical function may be to influence the perceptions of teachers and pupils, the beliefs and dreams on which they choose to act" (cited in Hart & Bredeson, 1996, p. 161). According to Hart and Bredeson (1996), "teachers tend to be more receptive to new principals with clear task expertise" (p. 169). This is one area where they think a principal's prior reputation and past experience may limit or facilitate success. Hart and Bredeson suggest that it would be helpful for principals to understand the circumstances under which the previous principal left. Brock and Grady (1995) agree that it is wise to be knowledgeable about your predecessor. They claim that "the perceptions of

the teachers and school community regarding the success or lack of success of the previous principal will be key factors in the acceptance of your leadership" (p. 3).

Fiedler's (1996) research reveals that "experience and job knowledge are completely unrelated to leadership performance" (p. 243). He claims that leader effectiveness is "the ability to get a group to accomplish its mission" (p. 242). Fiedler emphasizes that this depends not just on the leader's abilities and attributes but also on "how well the leader's personality, abilities, and behaviours match the situation in which the leader operates" (p. 242). Although Brock and Grady stress the importance of first impressions, they agree with Fiedler that to be most effective, the principal's preparation, experience, and expertise must match the needs of the school.

Stage frameworks present another approach to understanding leader succession. In organizational socialization studies, Nicholson and West (1988) identify three stages experienced by newcomers: encounter, adjustment and stabilization. Encounter is the arrival stage, which Nicholson and West describe as cognitive and affective. The cognitive appears to depend on three factors: (a) the amount of change – differences in the status, role requirements, and work environment between the new and old positions; (b) contrast—the carry-over involving people; and (c) surprise—unmet positive and negative expectations (Hart, 1993, p. 29). The affective focus on the ways in which people cope with their feelings during job change. The adjustment phase entails accommodating to the work role and fitting in with the people and the culture. Nicholson and West treat the stabilization and preparation stages together, since they found that stabilization sometimes does not occur. For new school leaders, Duke et al. (1984) determined that this stage required them "to negotiate two new sets of relationships simultaneously—one with superiors and one with faculty, staff, and students" (Hart, 1993, p. 30).

Feldman's (1976) three entry stages include: anticipation, accommodation, and role management. Anticipation includes "the complete

process of "getting in" to the new group, from preparation through selection and early entry" (Hart, 1993, p. 30). The accommodation stage involves: initiation to the job, initiation to the group, group interaction, and agreement on "fit"/ performance evaluation. Feldman's final role management stage centers on conflict resolution.

Wanous (1980) framed his stages as: confrontation, clarity, and location. He identifies the confrontation stage as an acceptance of the new social setting, where "expectations are confirmed or disconfirmed, conflicts between personal values and needs and the climate of the organization are confronted, and the aspects of self that the new setting will reinforce or suppress are discovered" (Hart, 1993, p. 31). Role clarity includes task assessment, interpersonal relationships and coping with any resistance to change. The location stage includes: learning which behaviors are compatible with expected behaviors, increasing commitment to the organization, altering or reaffirming self-image and values, and developing new interpersonal relationships, resulting in mutual acceptance.

From her synthesis of the succession research, Hart arrives at three fundamental beliefs about the relationship of new principals with schools:

- principal succession is best understood as a group experience in which the school and new principal influence each other;
- people have the ability to develop skill and experience understanding and working within socially complex situations; and
- a careful social and cultural analysis of the school should help them understand how people feel about critical aspects of the school.

There is an abundance of advice around for principals who are moving schools, but little consensus: bide your time; seize the day; don't make waves; capitalize on your window of opportunity; be creative; follow the superintendent's lead and so on. Based on their personal experiences, Brock and Grady (1995) are convinced that the critical first step is preparation, preparation, preparation... find out everything possible about the school,

district, and community; read the principal's job description, the faculty handbook, the student handbook, the curriculum guides, the school calendar, the supervision and evaluation manual, and the school's and district's annual reports. They suggest a series of probing questions for a principal to ask while preparing for a transition: What do I value as an educator? What are my beliefs about education? What experiences have I had that make me an effective leader? What is my leadership style? What are my strongest attributes? What are my past successes? What have I learned from past struggles and failures? What makes me the best choice for this principalship? What are my leadership strengths and the strengths that I bring to the principalship? What are my priorities? Is my primary focus on ideas or people? What is my level of trust in people? What is my interpersonal style? What impact do I have on others? What are my strengths and weaknesses in dealing with people? (p. 30). Brock and Grady claim that a period of "scrutiny, skepticism, and opposition" (p. 23) is likely, so patience is essential. Their advice is to "move slowly, tread lightly" (p. 43), and "consistently monitor responses of the group to determine which changes will be successful now and which ones should be delayed until trust has been established" (p. 28). They stress that although the principal's position authorizes formal authority, "informal authority and trust are earned" (p. 23).

Earley, Baker, and Weindling provide the following advice to principals who are changing schools: seek to build confidence in what you do; don't sit around too long; decide on your objectives and put a plan together; timing is important, you have got to be an opportunist ... seize the opportunity when you see an interest; support people who will make changes; be flexible but clear about the principles on which you stand; make sure that people who will be affected by changes have a say; spend a lot of time listening and establishing a sense of direction and long-term vision (cited in Brock & Grady, 1995, p. 43). A gentle reminder from Sarason (1993): "if we do not seek to enter their worlds, they will not seek to enter ours" (p. 20).

Hart presents three recommendations: gather sufficient knowledge, make some changes quickly, and balance the rate and extent of change to respect the fundamental nature of the existing school culture. She expects that these proposals will "call successors' attention to the importance of constant balance and sensitivity to emerging responses to their leadership within the school" (p. 294). Garubo and Rothstein (1998) call for administrators with skills in feeling, expression, and inquiry because "these skills will help them to be more sensitive and responsive to the people they serve and to discover whether the behaviour of others is merely an act or a true reflection of inner inclinations and emotions" (p. 4).

Griffith (1999) believes that a change in principals "reflects expectations among students and parents, in addition to the school administration and school staff, for change in school functioning and student performance" (p. 286). Joiner (1987) is convinced that to lead change, "the leader must believe without question that people are the most important asset of an organization" (cited in Mendez-Morse, 1992, p. 9). In addition, leaders of change must have the interpersonal skills that enable them to relate to others, to develop collaborative relationships and to foster supportive environments. Fullan (1988) offers ten guidelines for individual action in a change situation, but he cautions not to think of them in isolation. His suggestions are to:

- Avoid "if only" statements, externalizing the blame and other forms of wishful thinking.
- Start small but think big and don't over-plan or over-manage.
- Focus on something concrete and important like curriculum and instruction.
- Focus on something fundamental like the professional culture of the school.
- Practice fearlessness and other forms of risk taking.
- Empower others below you.
- Build a vision in relation to both goals and change processes.
- Decide what you are not going to do.

- Build allies.
- Know when to be cautious.

Hart and Bredeson (1996) conclude that "multiple, interactive social and personal factors combine in very different and powerful ways in each principal's succession" (p. 147). They answer the question as to whether succession is a constructive or disruptive event in schools with, "it depends". For every succession the mix of principal and school is different—thereby making each experience unique. Hart and Bredeson concur with Pfeffer and Davis-Blake (1986) that "the consequences of successions are likely to vary dramatically depending on the conditions surrounding them" (p. 148).

These excursions into the research surrounding principal succession generated some questions in my mind about the experience. How would principals' past circumstances, personal beliefs and cultural histories influence their present situations? If, as Lambert (1995) believes, relationships are the "most important factor in our past, present and future possibilities" (p. xii), how do veteran principals, when they move, establish these vital connections? How valuable to this process is time and sensitivity? Knowing that effective decision-making has been critically linked to the success of a school (Lunenburg, 1995, p. 136), where, in a change situation, "is fancy bred, in the heart or in the head?" (Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice). Addressing these and other questions required the design of the research to be thoughtfully constructed.

III. Research Design

In order to gain a genuine understanding of the succession process, I felt compelled to be there, to be a part of the moving process as it was being played out. I believe, like Coles (1989) that "what ought to be interesting . . . is the unfolding of a lived life rather than the confirmation such a chronicle provides or some theory" (p. 22). According to Van Manen (1990), "the choice should reflect more than mere whim, preference, taste, or fashion" (p. 2). My selection of a hermeneutic qualitative research design fits with Schwandt's (1989) assertion that "we conduct inquiry via a particular paradigm because it embodies assumptions about the world that we believe and values that we hold, and because we hold those assumptions and values we conduct inquiry according to the precepts of that paradigm" (cited by Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 9). This methodology was chosen as a suitable way in which to harmonize my intent to more deeply understand the succession experience with my own personality, beliefs, values, experiences and understandings. I was convinced that in order to gain this understanding that it would be necessary to look at the experience in a holistic sense within its particular context and with minimal structure.

I believe that principals beginning new assignments are unique individuals who arrive at their schools with different attributes, aptitudes and attitudes. The qualitative approach suited my aim to access the perceptions and perspectives of my participants about their succession experiences. Rudestam and Newton (1992) adhere to Polkinghorne's (1991) assertion that "qualitative methods are especially useful in the generation of categories for understanding human phenomena and the investigation of the interpretation and meaning that people give to events they experience" (p. 31). These principals are situated in schools that have specific cultural tapestries, and their own patterns of interaction and degrees of complexity. I believe, therefore, that each principal will experience a succession differently, and that each experience is open to "multiple, often conflicting meanings and

interpretations" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 19). The interpretive approach, as Glesne and Peshkin explain "perceive[s] reality as socially constructed and the researcher interacts with participants in order to understand their social constructions" (pp. 109-110). A hermeneutic approach to understanding acknowledged my awareness of the fact that I brought my own life experiences and expectations to this interaction with my participants and then subsequently to my interpretations of their experiences. It also supported my belief that the succession experiences could only be understood if that knowledge included an understanding of the contexts in which the successions occurred.

Like Bollnow (1974) I maintain the view that "understanding is a matter, not of the formal intellect alone, but of the depth of the soul with all of its forces" (cited in Evans, 1999, p. 6). I embraced narrative thinking because it acknowledges a personal relationship between the researcher and the participants and stresses the importance of considering the persons who were living and telling the stories, the times at which, and the places in which, the stories were lived and told (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999, p. 25). From a narrative perspective, the interpretation of an event can always be otherwise, one does "one's best" under the circumstances, knowing that other possibilities and interpretations are possible and consideration of the context is a necessity (p. 31). Usher (1996) confirms that

> when we delineate what we intend to study, when we adopt a particular theoretical position, when we ask certain kinds of questions rather than others, when we analyze and make sense of findings in one way rather than another, when we present our findings in a particular kind of text: all this is part of constructing a researchable world. In other words, research is not simply a matter of representing, reflecting or reporting the world but of "creating" it through a representation (p. 35).

Therefore, my methodology was specifically designed to illuminate the experiences of my participants, through their stories, and then to employ my own skill and judgment to interpret those experiences while constructing a deeper understanding of the succession phenomenon.

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) acknowledge that researchers "who reject the conventional scientific paradigm as inappropriate for the study of social phenomena also reject research techniques that are non-interactive in nature" (p. 41). Participant observation and participative conversations were the main qualitative techniques that I used to gather data for this study. Although they have been separated in this document for further explanation, I considered these techniques to be linked and supportive of one another. As Burbules (1997) states "a link can be viewed, on one level, as a simple transition, a bridge, a means of connection; but on a deeper level it represents a way of associating elements that inevitably affects how we understand them" (p. 33). My belief was that deeper meanings would surface through the interaction of all of the parts.

Participant Observation

One particular scene from the movie, Titanic, immediately struck a chord with me. The scene depicted the indifference of an elderly survivor, Rose, to the viewing of a factual video re-enactment of the disaster. It soon became obvious that Rose didn't need the video to remember. She declared: "it's been eighty-four years and I can still remember the smell of the fresh paint." As a participant observer in the dramatic action of the luxury liner's demise, Rose was able to put a human face on the tragedy. Her strong reaction lends credence to Van Manen's (1990) claim that "we need to find access to life's living dimensions" (p. 54). He also warns, though, that "the meanings we bring to the surface from the depths of life's oceans have already lost the natural quiver of their undisturbed existence" (p. 54).

Concurring with Weick's belief that "we need to spend more time watching leaders make do, let it pass, improvise, make inferences, scramble, and all the other things that leaders do during their days between more visible moments of glory" (in Lombardo & McCall, 1978, p. 60) and heeding Clandinin and Connelly's (1993) warning that "it makes a great deal of

difference if we distance ourselves from events in order to record notes or if we actively participate in events as a partner" (p. 24), I chose to become a participant observer at two schools. My intention was to put a human face on the drama of principal succession by observing the dynamics and complexities of the interactions and then, through the collection of individual stories, to "bring the mystery more fully into [our] presence" (Marcel, cited in van Manen, 1990, p. 50). I support Leonard's (1994) belief that "to understand a person's behaviour . . . one has to study the person in context. It is only in context that what a person values and finds significant shows up" (p. 51). Leonard's words endorse Goethe's notion that "a talent is formed in solitude, but a character in the torrent of the world" (Gray, 1968, p. 101). Smith and Peterson, from a slightly different perspective, agree that "it is the social context of leadership actions which gives them their meaning and consequently their effect" (cited in Hart, 1993, p. 16).

In my role as a shadow, I had the opportunity to observe the participants during formal and informal interactions with staff members, parents, and students, for time periods lasting anywhere from a few minutes to several hours. I was able to watch how the participants' actions corresponded with their words, to take note of patterns of behaviour, and to see them experience the unexpected. According to Lombardo and McCall (1978),

> there is a plethora of studies describing portions of what leaders and their subordinates say they do, could do, or should do; but only a smattering of studies describing what they actually do. Real life is complex, superficial, ambiguous, and irrational; but if the knowledge of the behavioural sciences is to be translated into usable guidelines for leaders, observational studies must complement the controlled conditions of the laboratory. (p. 7)

The desire to participate, along with observing, was a direct result of my past shadowing experiences in elementary schools, where I realized the difficulty of remaining stationary and somewhat 'apart' while expecting those around me to feel comfortable with my presence. During this study, I avoided

formality and aimed for a warm, friendly, and sincere relationship with my participants, which helped to develop a trust that in turn encouraged sharing.

I chose to be a participant observer aware of Wolcott's (1973) concern that "the role of the participant and the role of the observer are essentially complementary and mutually exclusive" (p. 7). Glesne and Peshkin (1992), too, recognize the challenges associated with being a participant observer but they also acknowledge the benefits. They claim that "the more you function as a member of the everyday world of the researched, the more you risk losing the eye of the uninvolved outsider; yet, the more you participate, the greater your opportunity to learn" (p. 40). At the beginning of the year, though, I worried about the availability of these opportunities to participate and to learn. I thought that perhaps my desire to be "a part" of the action was unrealistic, until I realized that the opportunities were indeed there, but the initiative had to come from me. Surprisingly, the observing process also turned out to be more of a challenge for me than I had anticipated.

My intent was to observe these experienced principals in action with what Gadamer refers to as "the opening up, and keeping open, of possibilities" (cited in Van Manen, 1990, p. 43). I did not want to limit myself to searching for answers to specific research questions, trusting, like Jackson that "if we look at and listen to almost any aspect of social reality long enough and closely enough, we begin to see nuances of meaning and significance that were not there before" (in Eisner & Peshkin, 1990, p. 161). Jackson reasons that "perhaps we have become so intent in looking *for* that we no longer know how to look *at*" and that "perhaps looking *for* encourages us to look *past* things rather than at them" (p. 163). He believes that "looking for constricts awareness; looking at expands it" (p. 163). My own certainty in the uniqueness of each succession experience seemed to negate in my mind the idea that the same questions could be asked of each principal and how it would be possible to know which were the right questions to ask.

My confidence in this open approach waned at times during my school visits when the lack of specific direction left me exposed to feelings of being

adrift. I was also concerned and discomfited during some visits by feelings of boredom. I worried that my strong interest in children's school lives was decreasing, that I was losing my enthusiasm for the research. Jackson, though, admits to similar doubts regarding his own enduring interest in the "ordinary stuff of schools and classrooms" (p. 161), and he cites Wolcott's admission that ordinary classroom events have a soporific effect (p. 156). Jackson is convinced that these thoughts are common among educational researchers. Indeed, Becker (1971) confides that while observing in classrooms, "it takes tremendous effort of will and imagination to stop seeing only the things that are conventionally 'there' to be seen" (cited in Carter & Delamont, 1998, p. 122), and Delamont concurs that the very "ordinariness," "routineness" and "everydayness" of life in many settings does indeed confound many researchers, who do complain that they are bored, they cannot find anything to write down, and that 'nothing happens' (1998, p. 122). I discovered, however, that during times of boredom, if I adjusted my lens a little and changed the focus, a whole new scene presented itself.

Participative Conversations

My wish was to listen to the stories told by my participants as they lived out their succession experiences. In a scene from the movie, Titanic, the captain of the ship closely follows a set of technical blueprints as he steers and guides the vessel through calm waters and navigates for the safety, comfort and preferences of the various passengers. But when the ship hits an iceberg, the captain discovers that the original plans are no longer applicable. This is a situation that calls for what Schon (1987) identifies as a "knowing-in-action." He describes this knowing as "a spontaneous, skillful execution of the performance" (p. 25) and one that is characteristically difficult to verbalize. Similarly, Sergiovanni (1991) refers to this distinct type of awareness as a coming together of the head, the hand and the heart, believing that "how we choose to manage and lead are personal reflections not only of our vision and

practical theories but of our personalities and our responses to the unique situations we face" (p. 321). Blumberg (1989) identifies:

> a special kind of know-how that is characterized as having a refined 'nose' for things, a sense of what constitutes an acceptable result in any particular problem situation, an understanding of the nature of the materials they work with, a mastery of the basic techniques undergirding the craft, skill to employ this technique effectively, and most importantly knowing what to do and when to do it. (p. 8)

It is my belief that the "how-to" focus of much of the existing research on succession exudes a static quality that does little to capture the essence of the experience, perhaps even helping to minimize the complexity of the interactions between a principal and the context in which the succession occurs. Greenfield (1993) is convinced that the widespread descriptions of the work of school principals in textbooks and in training program curricula do not adequately reflect "the actual character of the work-settings in schools" (p. 147). There are, sadly, very few actual accounts of principals' practical experiences during a change of schools and I believe that it is these accounts that can help us to grasp the essence of a succession experience. From her own research, Montero-Sieburth (1997) realized that the more she allowed herself "to know the context through their eyes, words and wisdom, the greater is the perspective I gain" (p. 129). This belief advanced my determination to listen to the stories being told by principals engaged in transitions.

Stories are a natural part of our lives, and can be found everywhere. Barthes (1977) claims that narrative is "simply there, like life itself," that it is "international, transhistorical, transcultural" (p. 79). Clandinin and Connelly (1990) maintain that "humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives" (p. 2), while Fulford (1999) contends that stories are the "juncture where facts and feelings meet" (p. 9). Perhaps I value stories, not only because I find they engage me both intellectually and emotionally, but as Lessing (1998) claims, "our brains are patterned for storytelling, for the consecutive" (cited in Fulford, 1999, p. 113). Van Maanen

(1988) maintains that "stories, by their ability to condense, exemplify, and evoke a world, are as valid a device for transmitting cultural understandings as any other researcher-produced concoction" (p. 25). Czarniaswska-Joerges (1997) speaks of story as being a natural form of organizational communication, and one that reveals a good deal about specific organizations. Czarniaswska-Joerges contends that "it is precisely in the story context that actors improvise against the background of known rules" (p. 79). She signifies stories as "critical, dramatic events in the life of an organization," combining traditional elements ("This is the way we do things in this organization.") with spontaneous features ("But does it actually apply in this case?") and creative aspects ("Now we do it this way instead.") (p. 79). Of particular importance to this research is Czarniaswska-Joerges' belief that the friction resulting from clashes between "the old" and "the new" is a repetitive topic in the stories of organizations. I am confident that significant understandings about how a succession process unfolds are revealed in the stories told by my participants.

Many of the stories told were not conveyed from beginning to end, but "through weavings of bits of talk, and touch, and looks, and sighs, through moments of closeness and distance, through remembrances of conversation that flowed and conversation that stopped and switched and turned even in mid-thought" (Neumann, 1997, p. 96). Initially, conversations with my participants gave us the opportunity to establish rapport, reinforce commitment and develop trust as we discovered and shared common experiences. Bateson (1994) contends that insight and deeper understanding come "by setting experiences yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another" (p. 14). The similarities in our past stories were not surprising, given that both participants happened to be female and of a similar age to myself, although gender and age were not factors in the participant selection process.

During my school visits spontaneous walk-along chats were on-going and assisted in enhancing and strengthening the developing relationships

between the participants and myself. More formal conversations took place in the principals' offices or at pre-arranged lunch meetings, away from the schools. During these times, and depending on the circumstances, a small, inconspicuous tape recorder was set up to record the discussions. These more prescribed conversations became occasions for both the participants and myself to question and connect ideas and to reflect on practice. As Wolcott (1973) contends: "the simple act of asking any question, no matter how cleverly couched in prose, may direct attention to behaviour that has otherwise been taken for granted" (p. 14). Tarule (1996) believes that: "voice animates thinking, produces thought, and enables the thinker to stabilize and expand her [sic] thought" (p. 279).

My role, throughout all conversations with my participants, both informal and formal, was as an active partner in the dialogue. I believe that my involvement contributed to a more relaxed atmosphere and more of a willingness on the part of the participants to speak freely. As well, these conversations were interpretive in nature, with our responses based on the focus of the discussion, previous comments made, choice of questions asked, amount of time taken and interpretation of body language.

The method chosen for this research was a direct result of my desire to know more about the process of leading in a direct, human way; to come to know what it looked like at that particular time, with that particular person at that particular school. My aim was to engage both my mind and my heart, believing like Frye (1968), that "intellect and emotion never get together in your mind as long as you're simply looking at the world" (p. 17). Neumann (1997) states that "people live their stories as much as they tell them in words" (p. 107). She claims that

> they live them in what they do not say. They live them in attending to the words of others rather than their own. They live them in the gaze that comes with inward thought and inward talk while others all around them are conversing. They live them in the feelings that come to surround them that they give off in sighs and looks and gestures, or simply in the feeling that their presence evokes in others. (p. 108)

I believe that the combination of participant observation and participative conversations worked together effectively to demonstrate that individual actions within a specific context communicate very powerful understandings, as well as to open up many new questions about this phenomenon.

Researcher Involvement

By choosing participant observation as a methodological strategy, I thus selected myself as the main instrument for data collection. In doing so, I expanded the number of roles I played to include actor and cameraperson. I became one of the actors on the set the minute I stepped past the entrance of each school. I realized that in one way or another, my presence there affected everyone, especially the principals. Their responses and their behaviours may have been adjusted according to what they perceived from my observations and note taking or from my reactions to particular actions and situations. As the cameraperson on these sets, I selected the focus and I chose when to fade in and fade out. I determined the angle of the shots, elected when to change from a long shot to a close-up and decided how to keep a number of separate but related lines of action going at the same time.

When filming a movie, the camera "is only an accessory to the human eye and serves principally to frame—to include and to exclude. Within the frame the artist collects that which he wishes us to share with him; beyond the frame is placed what he considers of no value to his thought" (von Sternberg, cited in Sobchack & Sobchack, 1980, p. 33). As an observer in the schools, my intent was to view the scenes accurately, with a wide-angle lens and a minimum of bias. The human eye, though, like the lens of a camera, is relatively selective in its focus, and attends to some small part of an entire area while failing to observe or remember actions outside its circle of concentration. I realize that "everything could be different than [I] see it" (Wittgenstein, cited in Greenfield, 1993, p. 53). In motion pictures, Sobchack and Sobchack (1980) tell us that "the angle from which the subject is

photographed dramatically affects the viewer's response to what he sees" (p. 45), and Lyman Ward, a character confined to a wheelchair in the book, *Angles of Repose,* discovers that "it is not so much what he sees as how he sees it that gives the external and internal worlds their truths" (Ely et al., 1997, p. 35).

Rabinow and Sullivan (1979) point out that there is no "outside detached standpoint from which to gather and present brute data. When we try to understand the cultural world, we are dealing with interpretations and interpretations of interpretations" (cited in T.B. Greenfield, 1984, p. 155). Greenfield adds: "we cannot escape ourselves as we make our world and as we try to understand the world others have made around us" (p. 143). He believes that "our capacity to understand is rooted in our own self-definitions hence in what we are. What we are is a self-interpreting and self-defining animal. We are always in a cultural world, amidst a "web of signification we ourselves have spun"" (p. 143).

My goals and my personal perceptions have influenced my interpretations of the experiences. As Burch states:

> my rendering of another's experience, however trusting and faithful I presume to be to what she says and does, is always inevitably my rendering, that is, a story constructed within the stream of my experience and personal history and hence meaningful to me in a way always different from the meaning of the experience to the participant.... it is not that my understanding is inevitably blinkered by my limited perspective, but that my perspective with all of its prejudices, is the very condition of my understanding, its locus and medium. (cited in Howard, 1994, p. 42)

Usher (1996) agrees that these are biases that are "ineliminably part of us, which can be recognized but not willed away. They are the marks of the trajectory of our desires and emotional investments in the research act" (p. 45). Van Manen (1990) proposes that we identify our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions and theories, "not in order to forget them again, but rather to hold them deliberately at bay and even to turn this knowledge against itself, as it were, thereby exposing its shallow or

concealing character" (p. 47). Rudestam and Newton (1992) agree that it is "vital to understand, acknowledge, and share one's own underlying values, assumptions, and expectations" (p. 38). I have, therefore, considered my personal biases an asset, another source of data, rather than a liability and I made every attempt to acknowledge their influences. As Usher (1996) concedes:

> in a framework of postmodern theory which argues for a foregrounding of how we construct what we are researching, reflexivity is no longer seen as a problem but as a resource. It helps us to recognize that we ourselves are a part of rather than apart from the world constructed through research. (p. 35)

Immersing my "self" in the research process naturally increased the potential for greater emotional involvement. Deren claims: "as we watch a film, the continuous act of recognition in which we are involved is like a strip of memory unrolling beneath the images of the film itself, to form the invisible under layer of an implicit double exposure" (cited in Amberg, 1972, p. 158). Therefore, I expose my own "invisible under layer" by revealing relevant autobiography, which I believe helps to contextualize any emotions involved and illuminates some of the beliefs and interests that have shaped the meanings I construct.

Like Patterson (1993), I believe that "we can't create a preferred future without knowing what we stand for" (p. 39). I am convinced that children's early school years are crucial to their long-term success, not only in education, but also in life. As Mariah Carey sings: "children are our future; treat them well and let them lead the way." I have always felt passionately about providing successful school learning experiences for young children. This passion extends naturally to school principals, whom I regard as vital links in determining school effectiveness. Even though I think of leadership in a school as extending beyond the role of one individual, I believe that the school principal in relationship with others (teachers, students, parents, district administrators, government officials, community members, special interest groups) can influence school culture, climate, vision and change.

Thus I believe they have considerable impact on the learning experiences of children.

My own moving picture about school principals began in my grade six year. At the impressionable age of twelve, I was selected by the principal to become a grade one "teacher." While only for a few hours, until a substitute arrived, it was long enough to become "hooked" on teaching. I immediately began offering my volunteer services to various youth groups on weekends and during the summers. I remain thankful to my elementary school principal for her belief in my ability, and I recall her with special fondness for the dreams that this experience inspired.

Memories of other principals remain vivid. My initial reaction to the stern looks and formal demeanor of my junior high school principal was fear. However, through active participation in school activities, I quickly discovered his soft heart and keen sense of humour. I wonder now, if others in the school community, who were not as involved, would have determined these qualities as well. I remember my high school principal as a warm and caring man, soft-spoken yet firm, and answering to the nickname "teddy." I wonder, now, what effect the passing years have had on these memories. Given the different personalities of these three principals, I also question what my experiences and theirs would have been, had they all changed places.

As a young teacher, the principal I remember most was the district's only female principal. I recall feeling very supported in my efforts with the students and their parents and I sensed the trust she had in my abilities as an educator. I did recognize, however, that she wasn't very comfortable relating to young children and that she was limited in her knowledge of primary instructional programs. Although she regularly displayed interest in our activities, I don't remember her talking to the children very much unless they were sent to her office for disciplining and she rarely visited my classroom. However, this leadership style could have been a direct result of the leadership theories at that time and the district's administrative structure. The

school board office did employ a district primary supervisor as well as a music coordinator who guided and supported our classroom programs.

When my own children were in school, my association with principals took on another new dimension. As an active volunteer, I worked closely with a number of principals, developing and organizing parent advisory councils, music programs, and school events. I also represented parents at district forums on program initiation, development and evaluation, as well as principal selection. At one elementary school, attended by my children, the principal changed three times over a five-year period. I was able, therefore, from a parent perspective, to witness some distinct ramifications of succession.

How important are these personal memories of principals? Clandinin and Connelly (1994) believe that "as researchers, we are always engaged in living, telling, reliving, and retelling our own stories. . . .We live out stories in our experiences, and modify them through retelling and reliving them" (p. 418). Even more importantly for me, though, is the understanding that "the research participants with whom we engage also live, tell, relive, and retell their own stories" (p. 418).

My story of principals took a new turn during my participation in a Masters program in the principalship. Through seminars, scholarly reading, reflective journaling, and mentorship activities, my perspective changed from student, teacher, parent, to principal. This perspective became more focused during a principal simulation course, which allowed me the opportunity to experience some aspects of a principal's work in a tightly simulated setting. In my reflective journal I wrote: *"The practice basket was exciting, stimulating and challenging: exciting, because I was finally getting the opportunity to attempt to think like a principal in a "real life situation;" stimulating, because now was my opportunity to synthesize the theoretical knowledge I've gained, with my own personal beliefs, in order to analyze the facts and arrive at an appropriate plan of action; challenging, because there is no right or wrong solution. So much depends on my own personality, the environment I'm in and the behaviours of others around me."*

Throughout the simulation process, I continuously reflected on my decisions and actions by comparing them to those taken by professional practitioners and by drawing on theoretical references. This process helped me: to develop a better understanding of the ways to think about and solve practical administrative problems; to recognize the importance of school culture as a factor influencing school effectiveness; to enhance my communication, time-management, delegation, and budgeting skills. Another entry in my reflective journal states: *"The reflective writing component has been a very valuable part of this course for me. It has enabled me to search inside myself and explore my inner feelings, and to examine the reasons why I was making the choices I did. Sergiovanni claims that heightened sensitivity and informed intuition are the trademarks of accomplished practice in all of the major professions. And I know that this simulation course has indeed heightened my sensitivity and informed my intuition."*

The numerous mentoring opportunities within the principalship program culminated in a year—long shadowing experience with one particular principal. I noted in my reflective journal: *"I feel that I have had a rare opportunity this past year to study in depth the topics which I had identified as goals for my mentorship: to explore the ways in which the principal perceives her role as leader of the school; to explore the ways in which the principal motivates the staff to be innovative and to continue to learn, to improve and thus to grow in their profession; to explore the themes of caring and trust in developing school culture and promoting collegiality; to explore the process involved in "shared" leadership. In my weekly observation journal, I have attempted to record the knowledge that I have been accumulating. Through readings, reflections and selected learning events, I have explored my emotional responses to situations and I have endeavoured to analyze my own personal skills as related to the principalship. Although I value the growth I feel that I have achieved this year, my journey, hopefully, will be continuous and life-long."*

I have not actually "lived through" the experience of being a principal. But through a long association with principals, I feel a genuine familiarity and connection. During my time in the schools, collecting the data for this study, I believe that this familiarity helped me to be more "sensitive to the stories already being lived, told, relived and retold" (Clandinin & Connelly, p. 15). Although my official role in the schools was as a researcher, I am also a student, a teacher and a parent, and I truly support Bateson's (1994) contention that "out of that multiplicity of vision came the possibility for insight" (p. 6). I agree with Goethe's firm belief that "one learns to know only what one loves, and the deeper and fuller the knowledge is to be, the more powerful and vivid must be the love, indeed the passion" (cited in Van Manen, 1990, p. 6). I was motivated in this research by a sincere desire to strengthen the understandings of the succession phenomenon to facilitate principals' transitions and thus permit schools to continue to become better places for children to flourish.

Selecting the Lead Actors

To bring a story to the screen, movie producers surround themselves with the best talent their budget can afford. Producers must ensure that the performers and crew function efficiently as a team, without too much aggravation and conflict. Inevitably, the final film depends to a large extent on the quality of the people the producer employs.

Similar to a film producer, I engaged specific criteria in the selection of principals for this study. Closely following Wolcott's (1973) rationale, the principals chosen were: "essential for the purposes of the study, necessary for the relationship between investigator and subject, or compatible with some personal biases of my own" (p. 1). The intent of this study was to capture "in motion" the succession stories of two principals who were moving to new schools. My preference was to identify volunteers who were willing to speak openly about their experiences, and who were genuinely interested in the

research topic and the potential understandings that could emerge. My inclination towards selecting elementary school principals flowed from the fact that I have had the most training and experience at this level as a classroom teacher. I believed that this knowledge would enable me to be more aware of the times when sensitivity and tactfulness was required. As Frye (1968) notes: "in ordinary life as in literature, the way you say things can be just as important as what's said. The words you use are like the clothes you wear" (p. 135). I felt confident that an intimate knowledge of life in elementary schools would help me: to offer any assurances needed by staff and parents as to my exact role in the school; to gain the extra permission necessary to access various documents; to recognize that my presence would produce some changes in the normal behaviour of the principal and staff members; to be attentive to developing relationships in the school, so as not to jeopardize them; to observe any non-verbal cues that I might be inadvertently displaying; and to show respect, openness, and a willingness to learn.

I began the selection process in June, by telephoning an administrator at the largest local school district in the city, and requesting the names of elementary school principals who were scheduled to change schools in September. I decided to initially approach, informally by telephone, those principals who were moving to schools close to where I lived. After three telephone calls, two principals, Collyn and Lenore, indicated a strong interest in participating in the study and one declined. If I had not been successful with nearby schools, I would have approached principals moving to schools that were farther away. The next step was to introduce myself properly, to discuss the purpose and process of the research in more detail, and to establish time commitments. To accommodate this, I arranged to casually meet with each of the interested principals, at locations outside of their schools. After their participation was informally agreed to, I wrote a letter to the school board and then to each of the principals to seek their formal approval to conduct the research study. My letter confirmed each principal's willingness to volunteer her time, the provisions put in place for confidentiality

and anonymity, and the fact that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The letter also informed them that the requisite ethical approval from the University had been obtained. The principals were advised that in the final written document their names and the names of their schools would be changed to protect their identities and to strengthen confidentiality. They acknowledged, yet were unfazed, by the strong possibility of being recognized by people familiar with the principals working within this particular school district.

Delimitation of the number of participants to two was a deliberate decision that I made, to allow me to spend more time at each of the schools, and to become better acquainted with each principal. The extended length of time spent at each school gave me the opportunity for a more in-depth observation of two principals' varying approaches to their new positions, based on differences in character and other personal qualities. As well, I was able to collect more intense data, which I believe has greatly contributed to the purpose of this study and strengthened its trustworthiness. I also thought that by alternating schools, and shadowing two principals simultaneously, my time at each school wouldn't seem too intrusive. My reasons for approaching principals from a large school district within the city of my residence and then from schools close to my home were to facilitate travel and reduce expenses.

I must admit to being initially surprised by the ease with which two veteran elementary school principals willingly volunteered their time to participate in this study. As Wolcott (1973) concludes from his research, a "curious dimension of being an elementary school principal is that, like many institutional roles, it makes great demands in personal commitment, in time and in energy . . ." (p. 325). Additionally, I was aware of the possibility of extra anxiety produced during a transition from one school to another. Goddard's (1997) study, although not directly about succession, indicated that those administrators with the longest experience were the ones who were encountering the most stress when coping with change:

> This may be, as some would suggest, because older principals place a greater importance on governance. Conversely, it may be that older administrators are more comfortable with the status quo and are less willing to accept the shifts in power commonly associated with the decentralization of school governance to the local community. (p. 5)

It became evident to me that these two consenting principals recognized and were taking advantage of an opportunity for continuous reflection and therefore a chance to more thoughtfully assess various situations as they arose at their schools. Hodgkinson would agree, insisting that

> practitioners can no longer be considered as managers, factotums or functionaries dedicated to some gospel of efficiency and effectiveness. On the contrary, they must become, in addition to all that, active philosophers, reflexive about practice and reflective about praxis. (cited in Greenfield, 1993, p. xv)

I realized, also, that these two principals cared enough about their responsibilities as educators to want to share their experiences with myself and others, in the hopes of providing mutual growth, collaborative support, and new insights that could lead to more in-depth knowledge. Consenting to participate in this study, these two principals revealed their confidence, as well as their courage.

Equipped with these understandings, I soon recognized that my own responsibilities to my participants extended well beyond the ethical considerations that were established in the University research guidelines. As Glesne and Peshkin (1992) explain: "ethical codes certainly guide research behaviour, but the degree to which research is or is not ethical depends on the researcher's continual communication and interaction with the research participants" (p. 125). I considered it my responsibility to establish relationships with my participants that were based on reciprocity, trust, caring, mutual respect, and collaborative learning. I quickly discovered that this goal was much easier to write about than to practice. Where were the guidelines for how to behave in each new and unique situation I found myself in? Punch (1998) admits, in his discussion on the ethics of qualitative research that

"there is no consensus or unanimity on what constitutes harm" (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, p. 179). He recognizes "that this area is a swamp," that he has "provided no map," and that each individual will have to trace his or her own path" (p. 179).

I had practiced for my first school visits beforehand, visualizing different scenarios, and using "freeze" plays to consider my responses to comments or actions. I had considered my attire carefully, as I knew that whatever I chose to wear would contribute to the overall tone of the visit. I remembered Fontana and Frey (1994)'s lesson that "looks, body postures, long silences, the way one dresses—all are significant" (p. 71). I was determined to avoid formality and to establish a warm and friendly rapport with my participants. Initially, this rapport was easily accomplished because of some similarities in our present lives and in our past experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (1990) note that: "relationships are joined, as MacIntyre (1981) implies, by the narrative unity of our lives" (p. 4). Developing a good relationship with my participants was a top priority for me. I believe, like Glesne and Peshkin (1992), that rapport equals trust, and "trust is the foundation for acquiring the fullest, most accurate disclosure a respondent is able to make" (p. 79). But as time progressed, the relationship with each principal evolved very differently, affected by personalities, circumstances, and time. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) warned that "connectedness with someone else's life does not occur without tensions and problems" (p. 55), and I discovered early on in this research the importance of being "wakeful and thoughtful" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999, p. 184).

In this murky business of relationships, I became engaged in a situation of change, instability and in one principal's case, continuous negotiation, in a manner somewhat similar to the daily experiences of my participants. Together, we were all in a continuous state of partial knowing, and it was my own moral foundation that became the guide to my conduct. I am convinced, like Clandinin and Connelly (1988), that collaborative research

requires a close relationship akin to friendship (p. 281). Therefore in delicate situations, I practiced what I considered to be the tenets of friendship. For me, friendship required a particular sensitivity to the "stories already being lived, told, relived, and retold" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1993, p.15). It involved a commitment to exercising good judgment, demonstrating continued interest, and acting out of a sense of responsibility and caring, not by "fixed rule but by affection and regard" (Noddings, 1984, p. 24). Noddings (1986) suggests that "while the ethic of caring cannot provide specific answers to ethical or educational questions, it can provide steady, rational guidance in the form of questions to be asked and directions to be taken" (p. 506). I strongly support Noddings' (1984) contention that "at bottom, all caring involves engrossment" and "our mental engrossment is on the cared-for, not on ourselves" (pp. 17 & 24).

Positive comments from both participants about our relationships were motivating and gratifying. They also served to increase my feelings of respect for, and responsibility to them. One principal remarked: "I trust you. You're here on a consistent basis but you're not here all the time. I know that you know what I'm talking about when I refer to important things. Who else is going to come out and listen the way you listen to me?"

In considering my relations to others in the school community, the terminology used for the ethics review became another area for me to reflect on. Words such as consent, and confidentiality and anonymity, gradually expanded in meaning for me. In practice, Punch (1998) admits: "professional codes and sound advice may not be all that clear and unambiguous in the field setting, in all its complexity and fluidity" (in Denzin & Lincoln, p. 180). The more time I spent in the schools interacting with other staff members, parents and students, the more I became aware of other issues surrounding informed consent. Although I had obtained permission to be at the schools from the participating principals and the school district, I admit to not having given any thought to the implications of that consent for other members of their school communities. I was, after all, a frequent visitor to classrooms and I attended

school events such as assemblies. I lingered in the school hallways, hung out in the main offices and conversed regularly in the staff rooms. I knew that both principals had informed their respective staff members about my on-going presence in their schools and about the focus of the study. They also habitually informed them about which days I would be present. However, I was also cognizant of the fact that my being there had not been an option for them. Thus, there were many times when I chose not to take along my notebook or, if I had it with me, not to record in it. I knew, especially in the staff rooms, that I was hearing and observing things that were not meant for my researcher's ears and eyes. Elementary school lights are already bright and I worried about adding a new set of eyes to the glare that the teachers already lived with.

Confidentiality and anonymity proved easy enough to implement at the start of the study before I had stepped into either one of the schools. But increasingly, the whole notion of being able to live by this ideal in a place as open as a school became troublesome for me. People traffic in the schools was constant and both principals regularly (and it seemed proudly) introduced me as a University researcher who was shadowing them during their school transitions. The principals also invited me to attend meetings with them outside the school, and neither one seemed the least concerned about my visibility. As one principal stated: "I feel very positive about what you're doing and I feel very comfortable. I don't feel any need not to be open about that, in terms of who you are, why you are here, and what our relationship is in terms of what you are doing." As an ethical and responsible researcher, these were difficult challenges to grapple with, considering my developing relationships with both participants. After much reflection, I decided that since it was a question of my participants' identities possibly becoming known, it seemed only right that they were the ones to make that call. I wondered, though, whether these principals should also decide for other members of their school communities.

In film, moving pictures are captured on a roll of dark film and come alive when viewed on the screen with a light projector. Shadow and light play together in research just as in film. I would like to be able to say that by shedding a little reflective light on some shadowy issues, I have resolved these questions, but I know that these issues will shift and change with each new study. As Janesick (1998) states: "once we boldly step into the life of another, we do so not only as researchers, but as participants in and of the human experience" (p. 126). Accepting Clandinin and Connelly's (1999) view that "as researchers, we also owe our care and responsibility to a larger audience, to the conversation of a scholarly discourse" (p. 184), I have illuminated some challenges I faced rather than promote any solutions. I believe that there will always be shadows attached to any research endeavor, and that surfacing these issues will create more sophisticated dialogue surrounding them. In addition, it will act as a caution to future qualitative researchers about adopting a false sense of security while they're out in the field. I concur with Punch's recommendation to "just do it by all means" (p. 180). But rather than just "think a bit first" as Punch advises, I support a vigilance more attuned to Wilkinson's (cited in Usher, 1996) appeal for a "continuous, critical examination of the practice/process of research to reveal its assumptions, values and biases" (p. 37).

Data Analysis

As a participant observer during one school year, in two different settings, I attentively watched plots unfold, noted various compositions and shades of lighting, participated in events and conversations, and listened to sounds and dialogue. I was amply rewarded for these efforts by a flood of field notes, reflective journals, conversation transcripts, and school documents, all crying out for interpretation. The word cry seemed apropos for a task that was so overwhelming. I identified immediately with Virginia Woolf's plea: "how can one make a life out of six cardboard boxes full of tailor's bills,

love letters and old picture postcards?" (cited in Edel, 1984, p. 19). My struggle was how to discover meaning in all of the individual pieces gathered from these moving pictures of succession? According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "what is at issue is the best means to 'make sense' of the data in ways that will facilitate the continuing unfolding of the inquiry, and second, lead to a maximal understanding of the phenomenon being studied" (p. 224).

Since I had recorded many of the conversations that took place in the principals' offices, this seemed like a good place to start. The recordings were transcribed on an on-going basis and the transcripts were returned to my participants for verification and further input at the conclusion of my tenure in each school. Both principals also reviewed my subsequent interpretations. The names of the schools, principals, teachers and students were changed in the final transcripts to protect their identities and to strengthen confidentiality. In order to understand the year in a more holistic sense, I constructed a chronologically organized chart for each school, which depicted visitation days, special events, field notes and personal journal comments. This graphic representation provided me with a visual aid to place along side the conversation transcripts. At this point, I felt prepared, confident and ready to proceed.

In film, the motion picture must "come together" in a visual, auditory and stylistic narrative that expresses the vision of the whole creative team and in a way that appeals to audiences. Film editors make decisions about the picture images and sounds that have been captured in production. They decide which pieces of the film footage to retain or discard. Once the footage has been selected, these various pieces of film, shot at different times and in different locations must be physically joined together in the appropriate order so that the shots become coherent sequences and scenes. The kinds of transitions the filmmaker uses to move from one shot to another, along with manipulations of time, are also the result of choices made during the editing process.

As editor of the research data, it was my responsibility to decide which stories and conversations to include and which ones to leave on the cutting room floor. The challenge was daunting. I felt it was crucial to present more than just a series of snapshots. The editing of a film is referred to as the heartbeat or pulse of a film. The order and rhythm of the editing, the editorial transitions, the number of shots in the entire film, the directional flow from image to image and the length of each shot shape the whole film, generating meaning from the relationship of all of the parts, and influencing audience perception of the entire film. To accomplish this task with my research data meant to clearly organize the individual pieces into a logical and meaningful progression, while at the same time demonstrating the inherent complexity and multi-dimensionality of the succession experiences.

As I became more and more immersed in the data analysis process, "clouds of muddled thought" (Fulford, 1999, p. 102) began to slowly envelop me, and to borrow a phrase from Geertz (1995) I became a "manic tinkerer adrift with [my] wits" (p. 20). I was aware of Glesne and Peshkin's (1992) belief that "personal commitment, trust, and time are key to rich data and useful interpretations" (p. 174), but I found it difficult at times, when I was most confused, to maintain a high level of commitment and to trust that ideas would start to come together and to make sense. At such times, it proved beneficial to consider in the data what Neumann (1997) labels the "unworded" stories, the silences that exist "as con/text – literally, with text... behind it, around it" (p. 111). As well, I practiced relaxing my mind as I thought through the stories. I forced myself to accept the lengthy time it often took to achieve a deeper level of reflection, and not to worry so much about the "empty" moments. Atwood's (1996) words also provided some comfort, as she notes that "when you are in the middle of a story it isn't a story at all, but only a confusion...." (Alias Grace).

Burbules' (1997) interpretation of the concept of aporia helped me to more fully understand my journey through this phase of the research development. Burbules employs Plato's notion of aporia, being a state of

conceptual puzzlement, as the basis for his thinking about learning and understanding. By deciphering the etymology of the word aporia, as "a-poros" meaning lacking a poros: a path, a passage, a way, Burbules contends that being in an aporetic state is not only a crisis of belief, but one of choice, of action and of identity (p. 34). He believes that this state affects a person on many levels at once and is accompanied by feelings of discomfort and doubt.

Amidst mounds of disparate data, my perpetually confused mind was definitely in an aporetic state. My thinking seemed to fit with what Burbules terms a "rhizomatic web" (p. 35). He describes this way of thinking as spreading in all directions, with no center and no given hierarchy of importance. I lacked "a-poros," a way to proceed, and my constant companions became uncertainty and anxiety. I had no set paths to follow, nor maps to guide my way. I was caught in a labyrinth—a maze of ideas with continually crisscrossing pathways. To compound the difficulty, my movement was not towards a fixed answer to a set question, but towards an unknown destination. It became crucial, therefore, to find my way within this labyrinth by creating my own map, as I went along. To make any progress at all required me to make choices, to edit.

In film, there are many editing techniques that are used to see how two separate events relate dramatically to each other. Montage is one such technique that combines images to produce an idea. Meaning and emotion are created not by the individual images but by the relationship of the images to each other. Intellectual montage is a juxtaposition of two unrelated images to create a new idea in the mind of the viewer. I used a similar montage technique in a reflective, intellectual sense through visualization. I regularly moved pieces of the puzzle around in my mind, setting pieces beside each other to see if they fit, imposing one piece on top of another to look for relationships. I found that through visualizing, I could connect the data on paper with the rolls of film footage stored in my head, and bring the written words alive with remembered tone and mood changes. Thematic meaning thus emerged not only from the data, but also from my familiarity with the

participants, the succession contexts and my respect for the reality of their stories.

I quickly discovered that once this content analysis began, it was continuous and exhausting. Words and themes haunted me incessantly, and new insights surfaced when I least expected them. At these usually inconvenient times, I was compelled to immediately write down my thoughts, fearful about losing any precious gems that might endanger my ability to arrive at any useful understandings. Surprisingly, this purging process became an enabling one. Once I had written an idea down, I no longer felt the need to remember it, thereby opening my mind to further possibilities. I monitored and questioned my own responses to the data, assessing any similarities or differences in judgment to catch any impulses I might have had to leap upon one set of meanings and to ignore another set. I consistently drew on intellectual perseverance to plow through the complexity and arrive at more in-depth meanings, rather than superficial understandings. At times, the movement was circular and I returned to the same story or conversation again and again. With each return came a new recognition, a meaningful association, accompanied by a feeling of immense satisfaction. Even so, I realized that every path I chose to follow prevented me from following a different path, that every opening to one association closed another, and that many other interpretations were possible.

Carter (1998) advises that "we must become much more self-conscious than we have been in the past about the issues involved in narrative and story, such as interpretation, authenticity, normative value and what our purposes are for telling stories in the first place" (in Carter & Delamont, 1998, p. 11). Clandinin and Connelly insist that when we become characters in their stories, we change their stories. Therefore, I regularly practiced reflective distancing from the data to allow for an openness and sensitivity to the stories told.

Principal succession is a realm where questions do not have correct answers, and where complexity is intrinsic. The data selection and analysis

process proved challenging, as I continually fluctuated between doubt and confidence, strangeness and familiarity, being lost and finding my way. Enduring a state of aporia, I was forced to make difficult choices about what to think and how to proceed. But I found, as Burbules did, that my feelings of puzzlement actually enhanced my curiosity and interest (p. 39), that my discomfort was informative and that getting lost allowed for new understandings to be found.

The Writing Process

The writing process began prior to my first day as a participant observer, and took the form of a reflective journal. Writing in this diary-like journal helped me to delineate my thoughts and feelings, throughout the school year, to discover ideas that "often lurk below the surface of conscious thought" (Ely et al., 1997, p. 9), and then to reflect on them. Like O'Connor, "I have to write to discover what I am doing. I don't know as well what I think until I see what I say; then I have to say it over again" (cited in Ely et al., 1997, p. 9). Through the use of this journal, I was able to mesh my "writing with the machinery of reflexivity" (Trinh, 1989, p. 23), exploring my thoughts and feelings regularly in order to be more aware of any biases that might emerge. Reflexivity, Usher (1996) explains, is "surfacing the pre-understandings which inform research and being aware of how these change in the course of the research" (p. 39).

My goal throughout the writing has been to tell the story of this research as truthfully as possible and to be sensitive of and responsible to the participating principals and schools. I believe that good writing requires accuracy and clear thinking. But Frye (1968) cautions against confusing "thinking with thinking in words" (p.119). He wonders about "what Beethoven was doing when he was thinking about his ninth symphony" (p. 119). Heeding Frye's warning, I engaged all of my senses in the thinking and writing process. I also followed Barthes' advice to "incessantly prune, eliminate,

forbid, purge, purify: in other words practice what may be called an ablution of language" (cited in Trinh, 1989, p. 17).

I did not write this dissertation in discrete sections but rather more holistically, writing bits and pieces of sections while alternating back and forth between parts at the beginning, middle and end. This weaving of ideas throughout the document definitely made the writing process more challenging. But in assuming this challenge, my intention was to avoid the pitfall of running out of steam before the final reflections, or as Glesne and Peshkin (1992) eloquently name, the "jewel in the writing crown" (p. 166). Using a film metaphor gave me the opportunity to take risks in the writing that allowed "my constructions and analyses to go beyond the safe and fairly obvious" (Ely et al., 1997, p. 8). By including personal challenges, questions and insights in the writing, I believe I have avoided "the devices of academic writing that hide the self" (Greenfield, 1993, p. 145).

I continually experimented with different ways that the writing could more accurately convey meaning. Ely et al. (1997) maintain that there are "dynamic and telling moments" in a research study and it is part of a qualitative researcher's job to portray these "as fully and as poignantly as possible" (p. 52). Van Manen (1990) agrees that capturing critical moments on paper may depend more on "the interpretive sensitivity, inventive thoughtfulness, scholarly tact, and writing talent of the human science researcher" (p. 34). Armed with these views, I thought and re-thought, wrote and re-wrote, again and again, in order to effectively capture and express the spirit of the lived succession experiences. The writing was not effortless, but Johnson contends that anyone "who casts to write a living line, must sweat" (cited by Kaplan-White, 1997, p. x). This struggle, though, is not revealed in the flow and simplicity of the final text. My wish has been to present an engaging, interpretive account that contains enough detail to draw readers "into the life events and the interpretation of what those may mean" (Ely et al., 1997, p. 52).

When I first read Glesne and Peshkin's (1992) statement that "the writer gearing up for writing is unsociable and ill-tempered while sorting and resorting data, trying to organize thoughts for writing" (p.156), I didn't believe that this would ever be me. I do admit, though, to having succumbed to this frame of mind. Yet I take some comfort in the knowledge that in Peshkin's experience, "the feeling is familiar, unwanted, and apparently unavoidable" (p. 156). Thankfully, it also passes....

Time

Time is a major factor in moving pictures, and it proved to be of like importance in the planning, implementation, analysis and writing of this research. The running time of a film describes its length, the exact number of minutes that it will occupy the space on a screen. Screen time is the time represented by the actions or events within the film and it is far longer than the running time, compressing days, weeks or even years into an hour or two. A large portion of the actual shooting time, the processes that go on in front or behind the camera never gets on film. Preparation and travel time are included in this process, but do not play a specific role in the finished film.

The running time of this research can be explained by citing the total number of written pages in the final document. The screen time, representing observations and conversations, has been manipulated through the editing process. The time allowed for particular stories and conversations has either been expanded or shortened. Stories that are longer to tell may appear to have taken more time than they actually did, whereas shorter stories may, in actual fact, have taken a much longer time. Time is also compressed when separate shots in a film are joined together, as is the case with the data is in this research document. The editing process can also give readers the impression of an uninterrupted flow of events. There may have been, however, minutes, hours, days, weeks, or even months between them.

The length of the shooting time for this research was one school year, beginning with the new school year in September and ending at the close of the school year in June. Limiting the study to two participants enabled me to spend more time at each school and with each principal. This extended length of time at the schools gave me more occasions for in-depth observation of the two principal's varying approaches to their new positions, and many opportunities to collect a great deal of data. Although audiotapes recorded many of our conversations, the replicated sound did not include visual clues such as facial expressions, body positions, and other movements, that are all essential to understanding the spoken words. I had ample time to keep a reflective journal, in addition to my field notes, in which to write down any notable gestures and nonverbal expressions, as well as emerging themes, interpretations and hunches.

Specific shooting times for visiting schools were scheduled at the convenience of the participants. These were influenced by outside schedules, pre-planned events, personal situations and unforeseen circumstances. Some delays unexpectedly provided the impetus for becoming better acquainted with my participants. The openness to a flexible time schedule permitted school visits on different days of the week and at different times of the month, which proved very beneficial for understanding the overall succession experience. Additional visits with the participants outside the school settings allowed valuable time for building trusting relationships.

The editing time for a movie often takes as long as the shooting time. Monterro-Sieburth (1997) maintains that extra time in the field is not useful unless it is used productively. She cautions that: "having the knowledge about what communities are really like in their everyday life requires more than spending time in the field. It means actually understanding the negotiations that take place, the contradictions that exist, and the interpretations people have of the rhythms of their lives' (p. 126). To accomplish this understanding, I allowed myself a year to interact with the data, and to practice the art of good listening to detect the emerging themes.

The psychological time of a film describes the viewer's sense of its pace and rhythm. A short film might seem quite long because we are bored, whereas a long film may seem quite short if we are interested. An analysis of psychological time is based on the viewer's response to the way the film is constructed. This research document has been designed and constructed using a motion picture metaphor with careful thought given to capturing the readers' attention and interest, as well as stimulating imagination and openness to possibility. Greene (1998) is passionate when referring to psychological time in research. She is adamant that "it is time to break through old dichotomies, time to acknowledge the "blurring of the disciplines" and the role of richly multiple "realities"(in Ayers & Miller, 1998, p. 35).

Trustworthiness of the Study

If any of the story elements in a movie contradict the main theme, the audience will seriously question the credibility of the story, the people, or the events. Qualitative research is much the same in this sense. Given the complexity of the world of lived experience, it is even more imperative to ensure that the data are trustworthy. According to Eisner (1998), "the criteria to be applied to any form of work should be guided by the features of the work itself; "rigor," if that is the right word, is different in different fields and in different forms" (p. 34). In this study, I have drawn on the collected wisdom of Wolcott (1973), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Van Manen (1990), Glesne & Peshkin (1992), Ely et al. (1997), and Neumann (1997) to assure its trustworthiness. I have addressed this issue using the following topics as guides: researcher training and credibility, researcher subjectivity and reflexivity, listening and writing skills, attention to feedback, and time.

University course work in qualitative research methodology provided me with the foundation and the incentive with which to begin this study. My interest in the topic gave me the impetus to read widely and deeply through the related literature. I believe that my background as a trained and

experienced elementary school teacher assisted me in my initial request for principals to participate in this study and for my smooth acceptance into their school communities. As well, I found that my intimate knowledge of elementary school life, my appreciation of the need for flexible scheduling, my familiarity with teaching young children, my understanding of the demanding work performed by teachers and principals, and my genuine respect for the pressures associated with working in schools proved helpful to everyone's comfort level throughout the school year. Following Van Manen's (1990) edict that "nothing is so silent as that which is taken for-granted or self-evident" (p. 112), I activated all of my senses to be alert to significant details, which I might otherwise have considered minor or unimportant. Remaining true to my belief that meaningful knowledge not only inhabits the brain but permeates one's whole being, I abided by Gray's (1968) suggestion that "to gain communication in depth with this world, our feelings must be cultivated constantly, sensitized and exercised as fully as the powers of intellect" (p. 85).

As I have matured, both intellectually and emotionally, in my understanding of the immensity and difficulty of qualitative inquiry, I remain a firm believer in the value of this type of research. I consider subjectivity to be a very valuable part of the qualitative approach. As Usher (1999) notes: "all research requires and operates through a set of pre-understandings" (p. 38), and I have therefore revealed my personal feelings and reactions where relevant. In doing so, I hope I have done justice to Mary-Claire van Leunen's warning to "avoid the devices of academic writing that hide the self as it constructs the facade of opinion it hopes will be regarded as objective fact" (Greenfield, 1993, p. 145). Like Wolcott (in Eisner & Peshkin, 1990), I embrace Erickson's (1973) belief in "rigorous subjectivity." I have thus put additional pressure on myself throughout, to carefully document my progress and to tell the story of this research accurately, honestly and sensitively, with a genuine respect for the participating principals and schools.

Allowing my emotions to surface led to a naturally ongoing reflexivity, in which I focused the lens inward to examine my own positions, values and

experiences in relation to what I was observing. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) maintain that "continuous alertness to your own biases, your own subjectivity, also assists in producing more trustworthy interpretations" (p. 147). Nourishing my thoughts with a mental picture of a favourite set of Russian nesting dolls, I have sought to find the deeper issues embedded in the more obvious ones. I have taken very seriously my responsibility to make sense of the data and to communicate that sense in a way for others to understand. But I have also presented the data in a way that I believe will allow readers to develop their own sense of the events and the people.

Fortunately, I have had company on this research journey. I have regularly sought input from my thesis supervisor, classmates, other professors and acquaintances who were also school principals. All of their wisdom was helpful in assessing the appropriateness of my interpretations, my sensitivity to people, issues and events and in developing new ideas and interpretations. In addition, I collected a variety of written materials and/or pictures from each of the schools to corroborate the field notes. Whenever possible, I recorded the conversations with the principals in order to capture the actual "moment." The transcripts of these conversations were then returned to the participants for their review, reflections and responses in order to ensure authenticity of the data. My subsequent interpretations of the data were also returned to the participants for their feedback to minimize the potential for misinterpretations.

According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), "time is a major factor in the acquisition of trustworthy data" (p. 146). They maintain that given a larger amount of time, participants will "less readily feign behaviour or feel the need to do so; moreover, they are more likely to be frank and comprehensive about what they tell you" (p. 146). The data for this study were collected over the span of a school year, in adherence to Glesne and Peshkin's advice and my own desire to be immersed in the experience over a prolonged period of time. The frequency of my visits to the schools allowed me the time needed to build sound relationships with my participants and other school personnel.

To establish these relationships, Wolcott urges researchers to talk little and to listen a lot. He believes that making a conscious effort to be sociable provides opportunities for people to talk (p. 128). During focused observation times, I carefully followed Wolcott's suggestion to listen a lot and to be sociable. But during conversations, I found that it was actually vital for me to talk more than just a little. At first, after listening to some of the taped conversations, I applauded when I heard my own voice stop after a brief question but I fretted when my voice droned on, and I silently warned myself to stop talking. However, after further and more focused listening, I realized that generally whenever I asked a question, my participants gave me answers that were specifically related to what I had asked about. In conversations where I shared some of my own experiences or thoughts, my participants would inevitably speak more freely about their own. This discovery indicated to me the necessity for and importance of reciprocity in conversation with my participants. Even with talking a little more than expected, and maybe because of it, I listened intently, as Neumann advises, to the con/text, the silences that existed "in the spaces between words, in the momentary stops between speakers in conversation with each other" (1997, p. 111). Indeed, in conversations with my participants, I endeavored to be both attentive and responsive at all times.

This attentiveness informed my written accounts as well. I began writing on the first day I entered each school and along with regular entries into a personal diary, I kept very detailed field notes for reference. These field notes were continuous anecdotal and/or explanatory notes on observations of objects, people and events. Whenever possible, I wrote my field notes directly during observations in order to accurately record the conversations and events as they unfolded. However, if I was participating in a classroom visit or an event, or if the observation circumstances were not conducive to note taking, then I composed the notes as soon afterwards as possible to minimize the potential for selective memory. My written first impressions proved to be a valuable resource for introducing readers to the school settings in the same

way that I first encountered them. Additionally, after extended observation time and opportunity for reflection, these first impressions have helped me to balance my perspectives.

The skills I have developed as a teacher, especially my multi-task orientation and my understanding of the language of school, have assisted me in my desire to present an accurate written account of my experiences in the schools. Wolcott supports this in his agreement with the views of many cultural anthropologists who argue that it is essential for ethnographers to learn and use the language of the people they are studying (p. 12). Ely et al. (1997) urge us "to be vigilant about how the language and method of analysis situate our movement, our spins, our revolutions, and our peripheral visions as we collect and write up our studies" (p.52). They believe that "the stance in looking, seeing, and gazing must have in it some desire to faithfully represent through the writing what we think is happening while at the same time remaining open to other explanations" (p. 52). To do so, I have diligently paid attention to the art of good writing, to make certain that I have written in a manner that is clear, accurate, sensitive, and comprehensive. I trusted Frye's (1968) contention that if the rhythm of a sentence was right, then its sense could look after itself (p. 122). Considering Van Manen's (1990) belief that lived life "is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal" (p. 18), I gave serious thought, throughout the writing process, to the various ways that the words could be placed to accurately represent and reveal meanings. These thoughts compelled me to write and re-write, again and again, alternating between the parts and the whole, in order to effectively capture and convey the spirit of the lived experiences of the principals. I also regularly edited my writing for technical accuracy and thoroughly assessed its coherence and internal consistency. Along with the extra hours it took to do this, there was definite discipline and rigor involved in the going back, thinking, writing, rewriting, editing, concentration and thoughtfulness. The flow and simplicity that I believe this text has achieved does not at all reveal the struggles involved in the writing.

Mindful that this writing reflects my "personal "signature" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 132), I believe that I have mustered enough courage in my approach to, and my discussion of, the data "to take risks that allow my constructions and analyses to go beyond the safe and fairly obvious" (anonymous researcher, cited by Ely et al., 1997, p. 8). I have included all through this document the personal questions, challenges and insights that emerged during the process of the research.

Viewers who attend movies often appear mesmerized by the passion in the story and become totally absorbed in the dramatic action and emotional lives of the characters. Similar to a compelling movie, in which viewers are challenged to invent, to infer and to analyze, Ely et al. are convinced that "a 'good' qualitative research report draws the readers into the life events and the interpretation of what those may mean" (p. 52). For further explanation, they cite Richardson's interpretation of the word "crystallize." She describes crystals as, "prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions" (p. 35), and she believes that "what we see depends upon our angle of repose" (p. 35). For Ely et al. (1997), the metaphor of a crystal describes "not only the habits of mind that inform the researcher's gaze, but also how the writing is shaped." My goal is that this completed research document has "crystallized" so that it reflects "the complex, partial, and multi-perspectives that refract meaning for and from the reader" (p. 35). Do these stories ring true? Are readers able to relate to any of the situations described? I am convinced that the truest test of trustworthiness ultimately rests with the readers of this research, especially with the principals who have experienced succession.

IV. Two Moving Pictures of Succession

The recent movie, Sliding Doors, depicts how a young girl's destiny is determined by the sliding doors of a subway train. If she makes it on board, her life takes on a new direction. If she's left standing on the platform, she has a whole different future to face. Using a parallel story technique, the movie allows the audience to follow this young girl's life down both paths simultaneously, demonstrating that there are two sides to every story. Sliding Doors is a tale that is mysterious, romantic, dangerous, comedic and thoroughly unpredictable. Similarly, I present the stories from two parallel succession experiences that also demonstrate distinct differences. These stories may not be as mysterious, romantic, dangerous, or comedic as Sliding Doors but they are full of an array of emotions and packed with events that are truly unpredictable.

Sliding Doors is composed of a sequence of camera shots and because of what is known as persistence of vision, "when a series of pictures is projected on a screen, our eyes blend the individual instances of movement together and we see what appears to be continuous movement" (Sobchack & Sobchack, p. 18). The narration, which takes place in continuous time, binds the film and creates a cohesive whole. Each week, my school visits were isolated "shots," which then became interlocking links in a continuing chain of narrative. As Trinh (1989) tells us: "each story is at once a fragment and a whole, a whole within a whole" (p. 123). Long after I closed the doors on my last school visits, the images and conversations remain as moving pictures in my head. In communicating these data, my intent is to remain true to these pictures and to reflect as accurately as possible the contexts and the participants. When we watch a movie, we instinctively seek a connection between one camera shot and the next, with the meaning of one shot thus revealed by its association with other shots, with what comes before and what follows. The tone of the film is usually a subtle accumulation of various elements, dictated much more by the overall effect than by any one element

(Sobchack & Sobchack, 1980, p. 18). I have fashioned the film clips (action fragments, sound bits, and observed practices) that I present in this section from field notes that I wrote during observations or as soon afterwards as possible. The narratives (which include the participants' stories, comments, opinions and reflective thinking) are intact pieces that I have extracted directly from sections of taped conversations. They highlight major points from these conversations and express themes talked about most often by the principals. The action fragments, sound bits, observed practices and stories that I have assembled here occurred at specific times during the school year, and I have arranged them progressively by month. Although time is compressed, the language of school is a living language, and thus together, they merge to create continuous movement. Presenting the data in this way reflects my belief that there is meaning to be found in a holistic sense, without any explanatory intrusion. As well, I believe that this method invites a refreshing variation of meaning and interpretation from readers.

The abundance of data I collected was a direct benefit of the length of time I spent at the schools, the relationships established with both principals and their commitment to this project as personal professional development. With such rich data, the challenge to select and share the most essential parts was enormous. To this difficult task, I brought serious thought, passion and sharp scissors. Yet after repeated cutting, a large amount of information still remained. Intensive soul searching strengthened my resolve not to diminish the essence of the experience in the name of brevity. To allow readers to see for themselves as much of the moving picture as possible, I decided to err on the side of providing too much detail rather than too little. However, given the limitations of this dissertation, I do not discuss all of the themes that are illuminated in the data. The beauty, then, of this moving picture is that readers have the option of either reading all the way through this section or fast-forwarding to my more limited discussion. In addition, the technique of "backwind" can be used to wind back any given length of this "film" in order to expose it a second time.

The image of a sliding door opening onto two different journeys is a very apt reflection for readers to sustain while reading this research. To collect the data, I did travel back and forth between the two schools throughout one complete school year. And although I viewed many commonalities of school life at each location, I still felt as if I was entering two very different moving sets. In choosing a way in which to convey the data, I have opted to respect the continuous progression of a school year, and the importance of this continuity to understanding the succession experiences. Therefore, rather than alternately sliding open the doors of two schools, I darken the screen on one succession story before lighting up another.

Composing the School Stories

School stories are set in motion when a school is built and the first students walk through its doors. Each story progresses differently depending on factors such as school size, levels of instruction, characteristics of the community, student population, mix of administrators, teachers and support staff. Every successive year in the life of a school becomes another "reel" in its continuing story. The moving picture of a school principal always exists within the frame of a particular school setting. These settings invariably differ among themselves in traditions, values, norms, and other social structures. Therefore, the landscape of each school communicates a specific way of life.

Lawrence-Lightfoot (Lyman, 2000) emphasizes the critical importance of context to the documentation of human experience and organizational culture. She identifies context as "the setting—physical, geographic, temporal, historical, cultural, aesthetic—within which the action takes place." She refers to context as "the framework, the reference point, the map, the ecological sphere. It is used to place people and action in time and space and as a resource for understanding what they say or do." (p. 15). Concurring with Lawrence-Lightfoot that "the context is rich in clues for interpreting the experience of the actors in a setting" (p. 15), I begin presenting the data by describing each of the research sites. Then, after a brief introduction to each

of the principals, I present action fragments, sound bits, observed practices and narratives, which I have constructed from my field notes and conversation transcripts. I have deleted hesitations and repetitions and I have edited sentence structure, to ensure a consistency in written expression not necessary in oral language. I have eliminated my voice from the stories in order to emphasize the voices of my participants. I recognize, though, that their words have been affected by personal interests and disinterests, my researcher interests and disinterests, my questions, comments and physical responses, as well as time limitations, what I selected to write down and when I chose to turn the tape on and off.

Kildonan School

Police cruisers decorated the parking lot of Kildonan School, as I arrived in September for my first visit. Entering the school I found myself facing two police officers, who were conversing with the principal. A number of teachers and the school secretary looked on from the sidelines. Although anxiety showed clearly on all of their faces, the atmosphere appeared to be one of calm acceptance, indicating to me that this scene was not unusual.

Kildonan School, 30 years old and housing approximately 230 students, is situated in the heart of a lower middle class, multi-cultural suburban area. The student population at Kildonan School is moderately transient with many students speaking languages other than English in their homes. A small but fairly active parent advisory council supports the school, and a number of community groups and support agencies provide after-school programming for many of the students.

An official school document confirms the school's philosophy as: "a caring community working together to instill in children the desire to pursue excellence in all facets of their education. In a meaningful and secure environment, students are encouraged to accept their personal and social

responsibilities, develop independent learning skills and value individual differences."

There is a strong focus at this school on literacy and numeracy, with extended time allotted in the lower grades for Balanced Literacy and Reading Recovery programs, as well as for mastering basic mathematical skills. Support is provided for a large number of mild, moderate and severe special needs students who are fully integrated into the regular classrooms. In addition to standard information entries, the school handbook includes a detailed description of the school's consulting and counseling services and their functions.

The school atmosphere is informal and friendly. Some classrooms open up to a central library while others are located down two hallways that extend out from the library area. The principal's office is located off the central area, with a door and a large window that look out into the library and another door that opens to the school's main office.

Introducing Collyn

Raised in a small town in the midst of a large family of educators, Collyn's first teaching opportunity was in a grade one class in the same school district where her father was the superintendent. Devastated by her father's sudden death during that year, Collyn moved on to teach at the junior high level and then for the Department of National Defense. Although she received excellent teaching evaluations, Collyn was dissatisfied with the regimented structure of the school. She moved to a large urban school district to teach in their language immersion program. After taking time off to travel and "find herself," Collyn was hired by the provincial Department of Education to write the French Elementary Language Arts program of studies. Having completed her contract, she became a district consultant for this program for one year before moving to the school level to teach French immersion to grades two, three and five.

Collyn accepted a part-time curriculum coordinator position so she could spend more time with her young son. A subsequent part-time language consultant position eventually became full time and led to a new job as a consultant in instructional processes. Along with consulting in effective teaching strategies, peer coaching, conflict resolution, change, and cooperative learning, a major part of Collyn's time was spent working with teachers in difficulty. Usually by the time Collyn was called in, the situation was too difficult to repair and her efforts were directed to the termination process. Consequently, Collyn organized workshops for other consultants on helping teachers in difficulty and for department heads and administrators on exemplary staff performance. Collyn was then appointed principal of a small elementary school, which was also a designated site for students with behaviour disorders. Her experience there was unique as the former principal remained as a teacher on staff. After three years as a principal, Collyn returned to full time university studies to complete her Masters of Education degree.

August

Sound Bit: "I believe in honouring the beliefs we hold about children when we interact together as educators and team members; in translating our beliefs into practices (lived actions); in affect; in making decisions based on sound educational research; in the value of every individual; in interdependence (teamness); that fair is not equal; that discomfort is a natural part of the change and growth process; in honest, open communication. So I: set individual goals; view staff on a continuum and set expectations accordingly; ask you to stretch and grow WITH support; ask you to share your expertise and special gifts; provide you with constructive feedback; celebrate your successes; acknowledge your personal situations; build from your strengths: individually, collectively; establish high expectations." (August staff meeting correspondence from Collyn to teachers)

September

Action Fragment: Policemen are called to the school after two nine-year old students go missing at morning recess. Collyn notifies the parents and the police scour the neighbourhood. Just before noon, the children surface at their respective homes. One child returns immediately to the school with his parents where he is spoken to by the policemen and by Collyn. The school secretary is included in all of the subsequent discussions about the boys and their families.

Sound Bits: Collyn introduces me to the students as a 'safe' adult; addresses the secretary as "oh wise one" and claims that she has a wealth of information on the backgrounds of the students; openly admits to the secretary that she does not like doing morning announcements over the intercom but will continue with this school ritual because the teachers like it; jokes with teachers in the staff room.

Observed Practices: Collyn spends time cleaning up the hallways, bulletin boards, walls, and library books; writes morning messages to staff that are then posted in the staff room; positions herself at doors and out on the tarmac during recesses and lunch for informal chats with students, teachers, and parents; keeps a written record of daily occurrences; begins to focus in on the previous year's student achievement results and on this year's professional development activities; initiates student-led school assemblies open to family and friends; hires substitute teachers to cover classes while teachers test students' academic levels; sets plan in motion to enlarge the small kindergarten room by breaking down a wall to a classroom that isn't presently in use.

Narratives: The former chair [of the school council] wanted me to fill in an application for a grant from the Edmonton Lotteries Foundation and she informed me of this on Friday the 4th of September and the application had to be in on the 11th of September. She and her husband had worked on it over the weekend but it wasn't really directed to the priorities of this school. After a discussion, we changed the proposal to make it fit the priorities. She told me

that my response to what she had done kind of put her off a bit because she had put all this work into it. But she could see my point. I actually sat down and wrote the stuff for her so that it would be ready on the 10th. This is the first week of school, this is somebody dropping into your office, and you take the time to do that because it is important. It would have been easy to say, oh forget the grant application and get on with life here. After all, the grant application is only for $1,500.00. $15,000.00 would have been worth the time. I made a choice right then that I had to do that. I also know that when I do something and when I show it to someone and somebody kind of says oh, ahh, well, it ticks me off too, but I'm not going to worry about some of those things. I'll just make up for it in different ways. This is the same lady who did not want to be the council chair again [this year], and because I'm the principal of the school I ran the election portion of the school council meeting. And I just kept asking for more nominations from the seven people who were there. And what happened is, you wear them down enough that they do offer to have a position, and the former chair was really pleased that I kept doing that. She actually came to see me the next day to thank me because now she didn't feel guilty about not offering her services another year. It was really nice.

* * *

During the first week of school, apparently there was someone who had stolen a car and was hiding it in the complex parking lot just across the street here and there were police all over the place and we didn't hear a thing. That kind of stuff happens here often. We don't know what kinds of lives these kids have once they leave the school grounds. I think we need to know more than just the obvious test scores. These scores tell me that the kids are doing pretty darn well, considering, and good for them. It breaks my heart to see, and to hear some of the things that go on, like that mother calling me and telling me that her kid was screaming and kicking, yet two minutes earlier we saw her out there smiling. There's an anomaly here. What I see and what

she tells me she sees are two very different things. Is a lot of this stuff exaggeration? Is it really happening? I want to know.

* * *

The secretary has been at this school for twelve years and has worked with a number of different principals so I think I'm number four, and this school's only had five. So, I'm the fourth principal she works with and we knew right away that we'd get along. You know how you get that feeling that you can laugh and things are okay. It just felt good. At first I was a little bit concerned, just the first couple of times I met her because the day that I came out to meet the staff she and a teacher aide went out for lunch. And I thought, gee, if my new principal were coming I'd stay for lunch no matter what. But I can understand now why she did it because I know her better now. She's the kind of person who needs to get away at lunchtime. She likes just going around, shopping, looking at stores, picking things up. The secretary and I actually went out for lunch with the previous principal before school started. We just went to touch base. I've known the previous principal for some time and she left this school really in good shape and with some very good people and I have no complaints at all. There's really not much that's concerning for me. I think our operating styles are similar, but I think I'm a little more relaxed in certain things and maybe a little bit more formal in others. I like writing. I like things to be written down. I like things in their place. I'm really kind of fanatic about documentation because I know that if you don't write it down you forget things and it's very important to be able to pull out a file. It's just my way of being organized. I know she did that too but I think I do it to a greater extent. I think I give teachers more choices than she did, but nothing outrageous. It's just that I hear little comments about it every so often, like gee, it's nice to be able to determine when this assembly is going to be, for example. I think I saw this school too with a fresh eye, a different eye. I'm concerned with appearances, perceptions of other people. When they come in and see what the school looks like, it's very telling and because I was new to the situation I think I saw things that the previous principal didn't see. For

instance, there were papers stapled to the wall in the front entrance like the flag schedule, who changes the flags and when. That's not what front foyers are all about. I'm just putting things together that should be together, or kind of more organized.

* * *

I outlined my expectations for assemblies and explained the reason why we needed to really build a link and a bond with our community. One way to do that is to change the format and to assign an assembly to each class. Once a year is not bad. In the past, they sang 'O Canada,' they had the super student awards, the golden garbage can award and I think that's it. There might have been a little something from maybe the music class. But it was always the music teacher's prerogative to organize it and to prepare the kids for everything and that's not fair. I feel that every class needs to have an opportunity to show that they can be leaders. So, I just said, now we'll sign up for assemblies. Who would like what assembly? So this month it was the grade sixes. They chose the day of the assembly, the time, and what was to be on the agenda and how it was going to be organized and what was said. One of the other things I'd like to encourage is that other classes contribute to the assemblies as well. The grade sixes are hosting it but it's okay for the grade twos to show their little dance, or whatever. But that'll come.

* * *

I moved the workroom around so that the teachers would have more space and I've heard many positive comments about how it's so much more pleasant to be able to have two people in there without bumping into others. It's less warm now and there are windows. I'm doing things more for the teachers. Some things are so small, but as far as teacher comfort and teacher well-being, it makes a difference. As far as approach to discipline, I believe the teachers think I'm a little bit softer than the previous principal but I'm not really. I think what's important for me is to get to know people and get to know what their expectations are of me before you start bumping things up to the point where you're backed in the corner.

* * *

The thing that I'm really asking the staff to do is professional development in curriculum alignment; to make sure that what's being taught is the curriculum. So our P.D. day is going to be curriculum alignment. Half of the day is going to be the new Language Arts protocol and the changes, what's new, and the other half is going to be the curriculum alignment process. We'll have a consultant come in to introduce the strategy and we do a questionnaire about what it is that we do and how we're doing it and then using charts, examine the fit between the teachers' long-range plans, and the curriculum. I think it's a good idea, because we're going to start with Language Arts and then we have an early Thursday afternoon so we can again use some of those afternoons to do math, social, science, the core. I think we're going to be much happier knowing that those long-range plans are actually meeting the curriculum expectations. There are many ways that curriculum can become misaligned. For example, if you've been teaching grade six for twelve years, the expectations are quite different. In math, we have a new curriculum in math. We have a new curriculum in science. You're learning all the time and the fact that you have a new program of studies in your hand, does not mean that you know what's in it. So, I've actually ordered new programs of studies for all of the teachers and new programs of curriculum in language arts and I think it was science. They all received the math program last year and the social studies program hasn't changed since 1980 something. Part of curriculum alignment is for the principal as well. I know that I know a lot about curriculum. I've been a consultant for many areas, especially in language areas. I can't say that I know everything about the new science program that was out just a few years ago. But I do know the topics and some of the other expectations because I made a point of hosting science in-services in my former school so that my staff could attend for free. That's part of a principal's job. There are so many ways to check on curriculum. I'll come up with a whole bunch of them as this year goes on. But as often as I can, I go into the classrooms and see what's going on.

* * *

We had a little girl who came back here after being in a different school for a year and being just a horrible kid in that other school. In fact, whenever that principal sees me he says thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. So you can imagine this girl spent most of her time sitting in the office or in school suspension. So far I've had to deal with her a number of times and told her these were all the warnings she was getting and I called in her dad. That, I don't think is going to make a huge amount of difference in this girl's case because there's something there. She was on medication and her dad took her off the medication. So she went right back to that previous energy level and impulsive as can be. She'll be back there until we can convince dad that something needs to be done. But now dad knows and we've laid the groundwork for what needs to happen next but I'm going to be as positive as I can about this. This little girl does not need to be sitting in the office. This girl needs to be in the classroom. If we can find good things about this young girl for the next little while we will be farther ahead than we would be if we were always picking on every little thing that she does. I also believe that fair is not equal. She is a special case. She needs to be treated differently. The discipline policy in the handbook was written by a former principal who liked to write a lot. Changes will come now because I have a different style and I believe that you really have to talk things out with kids. You have to make them see that actions have consequences. About this young girl, she has a lot of problems at lunchtime because it's an unstructured situation and she's been eating lunch at school. We have three lunchroom ladies, one whom she just doesn't pay attention to at all. So today this young girl has to shadow one of the lunchroom aides, one of the tougher ones, and she has to stay away from one-third of the playground. She has to stay totally away because she doesn't respect that adult and it's pretty obvious. She's eight or nine years old and she's had a pretty sad life to this point and she's very angry. She has to somehow feel that she's doing something right because certainly at the last school she didn't do anything right. When she was at this school before, she

and her sister were in the same class. It was awful. They had a reputation for stealing, for using inappropriate language, and that doesn't go away. It stays in the file. She was away for a year and is now back and it doesn't seem like it's as bad as it was. It certainly doesn't seem as intense as it was at the other of school and the reason is that she and her sister were separated. Dad sent one to the former school and one to our school. There's some good stuff here too, you know. It's not all bad. It's a single parent family—just a dad. Anyway, I tend to make sure I don't back myself into a corner. But some of the teachers, especially the ones in grade five and six want me to follow that lock step formula. This is what she did, so this is the consequence. Finished. I just can't buy that. I think if you lock yourself into a corner, you haven't given yourself any choice at all, and you certainly haven't had anybody else's input into what an appropriate consequence would be. I think it's very important to consult parents too. You don't just suspend somebody without discussing what other things could be done. What we're doing is defeating our purpose if we do that. I mean that's got to be the last-ditch effort and I think it's used far too often. We've finished one month and I know that my friends will be grade 4's and I know the three who will be visiting me quite often already. One has not been to see me for anything negative for the past 10 days because every time I see him I mention to him how proud I am of him and so I haven't seen him.

October

Action Fragment: Collyn receives a complaint from the supervisor of a nearby day care center. She claims the kindergarten teacher has been very outspoken and rude to one of their workers about the care of a particular child. The worker is upset, the parent is crying and the day care supervisor would like the teacher to apologize. Collyn advises the teacher to do so as a way to keep the peace in the community. The kindergarten teacher does not talk to Collyn for a day.

Sound Bits: Collyn wonders if she is doing too much; expresses confidence in the way events are unfolding; says she is a "proud" principal, feels well suited to being the principal of this school; admits there is no one really to confide in; likes having me around to talk to; is brutally honest with teachers about the achievement results review from the previous year, which has made some teachers unhappy; claims secretary is very chatty but not necessarily about school work; says about teachers: "little do they know how much power they have over me;" questions red flags about individual teachers and how big they should be;

Observed Practices: Continues to monitor construction on the Kindergarten room; regularly walks about the school and visits classrooms; brightens up the principal's office; tries to put chairs in the main office for visitors and relocate a tattered recycle box but the secretary refuses; dresses in orange and black for orange and black day at school; breakfasts with former principal; paper load from board office is heavy but takes some home on weekends; deals with vandalism, small fire has scorched an outside school wall; holds one on one meetings with teachers; contacts another school of similar size to inquire about their discipline practices.

Narratives: I spent yesterday putting the figures into the budget specifications and I was joking, and saying well, thirteen dollars weren't very hard to place. You know in reality, there was a lot more than thirteen dollars. But when I had finished with everything I had thirteen dollars left and I said, oh boy, I think I'll put it in printing because there's a lot of photocopying going on here. But being too glib gives a different impression sometimes. People here respond differently and I haven't quite learnt yet how discreet I have to be. I've already had a few people make comments, or joking comments, that I find hurtful. I don't think they're funny, and that's because they don't know me either and I don't know them. So, my response to them is to, it's a French expression, keep my tongue in my pocket. It's better to say less than more. Rather than saying the thirteen dollars weren't hard to place, today on the morning message I wrote that we'll be just fine. If you need the full

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information, come see me and I'll explain it all to you. The allocations are similar to last year's. That simply doesn't tell them anything, whereas in my mind, the thirteen dollars in printing tells me a lot more.

* * *

One teacher had a boy in his class last year, who was far worse than anybody he's got this year. Well, the way he'd get this kid on line was through a contract in positive reinforcement. The principal did all the work. She devised the contract and gave it to him. This same teacher said that one needs to be done for another child, but I'm not doing it. The student is doing that stuff for the teacher in the classroom, and should be handled by the teacher. If the teacher can't do anymore, then I would take over. But the child is new to the school, and you have to start small. You're not going to bump it up to the suspension or to a formal contract at this point. The teacher is going to have to take some of the responsibility. Period.

* * *

There's a teacher here whose class probably hasn't changed a stick or he hasn't even moved anything for the 12 years he's been here. But he's quite happy and he thinks he's doing what he should be doing. His kids are not suffering. To put this teacher in a school with all the bells and whistles would not change him. You can often do a lot with very little when you are a gifted teacher. Having the resources, having the stuff doesn't necessarily mean that you need it or use it appropriately. It's probably more important for the kids in this teacher's class to take care of a pet fish than it is for them to have access to the Internet. You have to understand the group of kids he's got. If there are going to be any discipline problems, they are going to be in his class, and this teacher knows his stuff.

* * *

At my former school, I replaced a principal who had been basically told that he couldn't be a principal anymore but he insisted on remaining in that school. But it was well known that this was not an effective principal. It was known by the staff and by the parents and by downtown. It was really well known that they didn't even want him there anymore. So, when I came in and

actually started talking about student achievement and student learning, that was something they hadn't heard about for about seven or eight years. So, I actually didn't feel the way I do here at all. I did feel that my consulting background may have shown through and maybe people from downtown are not necessarily seen as wonderful people when they go into the school because they come with a lot of theory and very little practice. I had to prove to them that it wasn't just talk but it was going to make a difference and that took two years. It didn't just happen like magic. So, going into that school was quite different than coming into this one. There are certainly different strengths in this school.

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The teacher sent me this young girl that I've talked to you about because she had said a bad word. And I wasn't sure what he wanted me to do with her because this was the first time she'd come to the office for that and as you know, it's the frequency and it's the number of times that something happens that determines what you do. Stuff that happened two years ago when she was here I have no knowledge of and I will not dwell on here-say that I've gotten from another principal. I will not consider that. It has to be the here and now and it's has to be what's happened while she's at this school and I'm at this school or some history from the teacher. But I had nothing like that, so I just said don't say that again. Later on the teacher asked if she got a playground offense sheet for that and I said why would I give her one. Well, he said, we have to. I think the context is a little out of whack. Would you like your daughter to get a playground offense sheet the very first time that something didn't go right because in her other school two years ago somebody said we have to? I think the other thing is that it's usually not that last thing that's the reason they're sent to the office but it's that couple of things before that the student has done and the teacher has worn whatever sense of cool to a very thin veneer and then it kind of cracks.

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As you saw from when I was having that one-on-one with that particular teacher that he's not taking this very seriously. It's a really tricky

situation because I'm walking into a situation that was created obviously and has been perpetuated for a number of years. I have no qualms, no problems with what he's doing with his kids in class. I laughed yesterday. He was handing out atlases and he made us all put the atlas on our shoulders and asked us how heavy it was. He's got a real sense of humor and he's dedicated. He does lots of wonderful things. I think what I'm going to do is what I did during the one-on-one and that's to keep the tone really serious and really focused on kids. I think I have to do that and when he gives me goals like he did last week, to change them to make a negative situation into a positive situation if we can. I don't think he's going to be very different six months from now. I had to work with someone much like him before and well, I don't want to give up before I start, but I will just continue role-modeling and being serious about education in every form and every which way I can. My experience as an effective teaching consultant has been very helpful. I think just about everyone in this school has gone through some kind of effective teaching program so there's common terminology. It definitely helps me because I know what I'm talking about and I can actually put my hand on handouts or I can demonstrate how to do something or I can point it out in the classroom well, you did this and you did that really well. It certainly does make a big difference. I think it makes a difference in your credibility as well.

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I try to downplay my experiences at my former school as much as possible. I had a teacher who kept talking about her former school and how well things had gone there and I just wanted to choke her. So, I make a point of not, and I very seldom use the name of the school. I just say things like in the past this is how I'm used to things happening, how different is it here? Acknowledging that other schools are doing things a little bit better perhaps, maybe we have to re-examine some things. I think other schools find it a compliment if someone says I was there last year and this is what I saw and I'd really like to have a copy of it. Yesterday, I phoned another school to ask them to send me their lunch program letter from the beginning of the year

because I had heard that it was a good letter. Would they please do that and it was on the fax this morning. I don't think they get enough kudos. If your school is running smoothly you don't hear about it. You only hear about it when there's a problem or an issue and someone goes downtown with it. It's interesting. We always take the time to criticize but we don't often take the time to go and say you know you're doing a really good job here. Or this is what I really like about what I see. I was thinking this morning how much time I spent on what at this school, and downtown people do not realize how much time you spend on lunchroom, how much time you spend on kids going home and making it home safely, how much time you spend on things that really have not much to do with academics and student growth. I mean other than the peripherals and safety and issues. But lunchroom just takes up so much of the time. Somebody downtown somebody should figure out who's got really good stuff going and share that expertise with the rest of us. Busing is another big issue. Transportation. There are no in-services downtown to talk about what a principal's responsibility is once that student gets on the bus. For example, I had a kid moon the other people on the Capilano Bridge and I had to deal with it. I'm the one who had to suspend him from the bus. The bus driver just tells me and I deal with it. It's pretty serious but it's usually not that big of a deal. Depending on the kids.

November

Action Fragment: Collyn admits that this is the first school where people hang up on her. Today a parent calls as the morning bell is ringing and wants to speak to the grade two teacher. Collyn tells her that the bell has just gone, and asks if she can take a message and have the teacher call her back? The parent's response is: "you guys never give messages to the people. They never call back." Whank! Collyn's concern is for children living in that kind of volatile situation.

Sound Bits: Collyn is bothered by a comment from the secretary that parents in this area are low class; disclosures to teachers from private office

talks forces Collyn to refrain from talking to the secretary as much as she has been; some remarks made by teachers are hurtful; issues of trust surface.

Observed Practices: Collyn has removed tattered recycle box from front office; visits kindergarten class to talk about bears; continues to be visible and available around the school; helps students in classes with their learning; offers support to teachers; organizes collaborative staff meeting with discipline procedures as a key topic; attends to boiler break down; reviews new job descriptions for support staff; sets up mentor relationship for the secretary with a skilled and experienced friend; carries on with school routines from previous year; visits with a parade of children who appear in her office to read to her or show her their work; receives phone calls from parents about the lunch room, articles of clothing; chooses to sign up for a district professional development course on people skills rather than on assessment.

Narratives: At the vertical principals' meeting we got a package, a thick, thick, package on the custodial issue and I don't have a custodial issue. So you are now forced to read stuff that really has nothing to do with you or that you're really marginally interested in, a one liner would do it, thank you, but I think it's in the guise of open communication. I think it's going to backfire. There's just too much of this information coming down the tubes. It's taking far too long and it's not readable. I can see both sides of the issue but my heart is not in that. This vertical group is very different, I believe, to the ones in previous years. There are people trying to find the Achilles heel, trying to find things that are not right, trying to streamline and do their work for them. People who think they know a lot more. Whereas the other group I was in was let's do PD and we'd all have to present something about what's happening in our school. It was very different. I'm not sure we're getting anywhere and I'm not sure we're doing anything that's worthwhile. The principals' meetings are downtown. They're an hour of the power of teaching or an hour of how can we motivate the teaching professional or an hour of this is how well we did last year and this is what we need to do. They're pep talks and they're okay but there's no discussion afterwards. It's not a lecture but more like a speech

with no time to talk about what we heard. There's no time to compare notes. But we're all downtown. We're all at the principals' meeting. They could break out in their little groups and have a discussion. Now it's like okay, what do we do now? It's bad, bad, bad. We should meet in vertical groups after the meetings and then it wouldn't mean another meeting.

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I was just talking to her [grade five teacher/school counselor], being a little bit glib about, having to cut corners. We're in deficit, so we can do this maybe a little different way, or somebody else can do that particular thing. Teachers here have to be in front of kids. We can't hire teachers to sit in offices or to rearrange books in the library. They have to be working with kids while they're here, and I was just being glib. But on Tuesday morning, she came into the office in what I call the edge—one more thing and she would have gone off the deep end. She was basically almost crying because I said that the reading specialist and the psychologist were not going to have a standing date at the school come the first Monday of every month because we just don't have the kids that need testing. We can't afford to pay $1,000 for their services for them to come and chit-chat, or to have meetings with parents. We just can't afford it. She was crying because this has been going on for years here and she bakes cookies for these people and it's like a social occasion for her, and that it's going to be the last time, and it was my doing. These are her friends and now it's not going to happen anymore. So she's really upset about it. She couldn't sleep the night before because this is really bothering her. Then, they arrived and she has known for a month that they were going to be testing two specific kids and she hadn't made any moves to get cum records, to get documentation, to get referrals, to get anything together for them. So she was running around all over the place making photocopies of this, running around to find that, not being able to find the cum records she has buried under other things in her office. She was confused, and almost in tears. Then the bell rings and she is supposed to be teaching. She should be with the grade five kids. She should go get them and her

lawyer phones. So, she's got two people coming to the school for the last time and this is like grieving. She's not organized. She hasn't got the stuff together that she should have had together a month ago. She's got kids that are her responsibility and she should be with them and then somebody phones at an inappropriate time and she needs to take that phone call. Four things are happening. And then, on top of it, she says, and I overheard, if you cut the counseling time in this school next year, I'm gone. You know, all these things together really don't paint a very pretty picture. Bottom line is when you have two afternoons and other time during the week, it's very important to use that time profitably and for what it's meant to be. You're never going to prove to me now that this school needs a counselor after I've observed what's happened during counseling time. I think you have to be realistic and live in the reality of the 1999 fiscal situation in the school. There are no other schools around here that have counselors or even librarians, because there's no money for it. Let's face the facts. So I've been basically told that if I cut that time, then she's going to be looking for another job. But I know that this information got to her from the secretary. So, how do I know who to trust? I don't know who to trust because that kind of things happens. There are pieces of information that I shared with the secretary that I thought were in confidence and that would have been at my other school. Had I known that it would have gone further, I wouldn't have said anything. I also, you know, just hear stories. I'm not sure who to trust because one teacher's a really nice guy, and he's very funny. But he's not one wit serious about his job. Another teacher does everything to make me think that she's just a wonderful teacher. In fact, her standard line to her kids is, yeah I'm the best teacher you've ever had, so the rhetoric is starting to come out—very, very insecure. When I thought I had figured out who was the informal leader in the school, I was told by a couple of others that they weren't really ever going to listen to that person because she's too preachy. She always has the final say or she always knows better. What I've decided to do is I'm going to be the principal of this school and I'm going to do what's right for the kids. I'm going to do

what's right for the teachers and I'm not going to worry about it. I won't be insensitive, but I won't be ruled by tears. I will not be ruled by accusations or things that I feel are weird. The Kindergarten teacher, for example, and that incident with the daycare—she still isn't able to look at me in the eye. I still look at her in the eye. I know I did the right thing.

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I had some wonderful visits this morning. Little Aaron in grade two drew the most beautiful picture with shadows. It was just outstanding. The grade six students want to sell hot chocolate to raise money for the kids in Guatemala. I think, wow! One of the students was looking up what agencies they can call as a class to get some help. Isn't this wonderful? This little girl is an opportunity kid [low IQ]. This artwork is absolutely outstanding. She could rival high school kids in this picture that she drew for her teacher. I told her that I would put it up on my door if she wanted to bring it back.

* * *

I think that principals need to give their staff the opportunity to make the right decisions. I think that there's a professional thing here that the principal doesn't detail what teachers do, like teachers should be able to do what it is that they do and do it well. And my job is to make sure that that does happen because it doesn't happen in all cases. I think my job is to be a buffer at times between two different points of view. I also have to make sure that teachers know that sometimes they have to acknowledge that they need to change things too. They have to change their mindset. My biggest job in this school is going to be to help some of those people who aren't student-centered, and that's my job as a principal to do that. I know that my responsibility here is to make sure that the kids achieve. I'm doing a lot of talking about kids and where kids are at and what kinds of things we need to do so kids can get better. And how they can just move over that one hump and then go on to the next level. I think that the teachers have a different perception of leadership, of what their principal should be doing than a principal does. According to the teachers, I approve each expenditure that they want to make. Everything. I find this a little much but I guess when a

school's in deficit you have to do that. They expect me to do that. They expect me to make sure that everything is in functioning order, like the Xerox is working because boy, we'll need copies and that there's paper and that all the resources are there. The expectation is that should there be a discipline problem I would become involved. Yet all the documents, and all the paperwork around here says that the administration gets involved after the person on supervision deals with it, and the classroom teacher deals with it. Then they go to the principal. And yet, I have people come to me without having gone through the other processes. But they expect me to just drop everything and deal with it. They expect me to write beautiful things like the newsletter and make them sound really good and I do. They expect me to write them a little pep message every morning but I can't be too enthusiastic because I've been told that I'm just too energetic and too happy, too much of a fun person early in the morning. I get to do all extra supervision. I get to go into their class and take over should they need to, maybe their son's having a birthday party today and they're going to have to leave a little early, is that okay? How could you say no? Your son only has a birthday party once a year. I can't. I have a kid. I wanted to go to his birthday parties. So, the expectations that I take over their class is, when they ask nicely. I will definitely take over their classes when they have an appointment with a psychologist or a specialist or a parent in here. When they send kids to the office they expect me to drop everything and have the kid paraded into my office. I've come to the point where, if it's discipline I do it in the room next door, if it's positive I do it in here – a little bit of separation. It just kind of makes my office a little purer.

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I just finished documenting a phone call I got this morning from a mom in kindergarten who phoned because she thought the teacher was grabbing her kid's hand too often. Here's the story. The little girl was in the kindergarten room and she was supposed to be working at one center and she was not at the right center. She was looking at a pencil like this so the

teacher grabbed her hands and said put it down, and the boyfriend happened to see this and he was upset that the teacher had touched his kid. I'm not even going to talk to the teacher about it. I just feel like we're just really pushing it here. I asked her, the mom, if she had talked to the teacher about this incident? No. Had anybody talked to the teacher about the incident? No. Would you like me to talk to the teacher about this incident? No. What would you like me to do about this? Well, let's monitor it until parent teacher interviews and if it happens again please tell me, or tell the teacher. I think he just wanted to have some contact and to tell me that the teachers at this school were not perfect. All teachers put their hand on kids to stop the fidgeting. I did it. So that's the decision I've made—I'm not telling the teacher. Usually I would have asked how's this mother with the teachers? Does she always have a complaint about something or other? I would have asked those questions but I'm not even going to ask them. Maybe I'm not making a wise choice but I think I am. The Kindergarten teacher didn't like the incident with the day care that I documented, and you can tell that she's very hesitant. Maybe she's decided that she doesn't want to work for me next year. Maybe that's true but I'm not changing my mind. I think it's a game. But this thing about putting your hand on somebody, on a child's hand, is . . . This is twice this year that I've had a complaint about the same kind of thing. I'm just wondering how much these parents have been listened to in the past. This is even beyond a complaint. They must have nothing else to do. I suppose I could approach the teacher in a way that wouldn't be threatening to her. I have to be very sensitive about it.

* * *

Getting back to the Kindergarten teacher and the mom who phoned a week ago with the boyfriend who had seen the teacher take a pencil out of the daughter's hand. At that time I said such a silly little thing and I said well, there are some things principals should just keep to themselves. But that lasted until about 4:00 that afternoon. I said there are some things that principals keep to themselves but this is something that the Kindergarten

teacher needs to know. If the Kindergarten teacher discussed it with the mom and told her what actually happened, we wouldn't have a problem. I went to see the teacher the next morning and I told her that I really believed that teachers needed to know everything that I know and vice versa. I asked her how this child was as a student to start off the conversation and she was telling me that the child has really been babied, has always had things done for her and has pretty well done what she wanted. So I said, well I got a phone call from the mom about the boyfriend seeing you touch the child's hand to get a pencil out of it and she said, oh that. It was a very innocent little incident but in the end she thanked me for telling her and she told me that she would be talking with the mom about the incident and that awareness was 100% of it in this case because she just did it naturally like any mom would do when their child has something that they shouldn't be playing with. You just put your hand on it and take it away as you're doing something—a very low-key response. She told me that the boyfriend wasn't even in the classroom and he couldn't possibly have seen through the walls. But then maybe somebody else told him.

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I think my relationship with the Kindergarten teacher has definitely improved. That was a learning experience for both of us and I will look upon it as such. I know I did the right thing about the day care. There's been no more talk about it. We've found other things to talk about because other things come along and take precedence. I still think this teacher is fragile. I'm not sure she's even going to make it till the end of the year stress-wise. I don't think this incident is the indicator itself. I think many others have happened in the past and will happen in the future because of her nature and because of her home situation. She and her husband are getting a divorce, a really dirty divorce and there are other things going on as well. Anybody who has all those things going against her can't help but at one point become very stressed. I only found out yesterday that she was on stress leave for a couple

of weeks last year just before Christmas. I wouldn't be surprised if it happens again.

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I heard something really neat yesterday. I was just walking to the staff room at lunchtime and I could hear them talking about me, and what they were saying was so positive. It was a real moment, a real uplifting moment for me. You never know if people are going to like what you do or how you do things and I heard them say, she's so nice, she's so supportive. I guess I must be doing my job. It's not my job to be popular. It sure helps though. It's really important to build rapport. And then the other things can be approached in a way that's much more acceptable and that people can buy. If I like you I will be likelier to listen to what it is you have to say than if I don't. I don't know these people yet. I have to give it a period of finding out a lot of things before I actually start making too many changes. I have made some changes in this school. A lot of people will tell you that there are lots of different things happening here than even last year. But as far as approaching the teachers and their performance, I've only had the one-on-ones where I've done some work there. I'm starting but I'm not going to go into Lynne's [Grade six teacher] class where I think there is too much testing and say stop testing. This testing is stupid. I'm not going to do that because I would get nowhere. I don't know exactly what it is or how I'm going to approach that. I know I'm starting to get more of a feel of what it is I actually have to do. I have to handle every situation as it comes. There's no black and white in a principalship. There's a lot of gray. My priority is to strive to find some kind of balance because I think it was overbalanced one way. I'm not exactly sure where the limits and the boundaries are. One of the things I'm concerned about is that these kids are not getting what other kids are getting and yet I don't know where we fit that in at this time with this structure. Like in academics and even just resources or support and I'm not just talking about parental support. It's inequity actually and a lot of it is determined by plain old dollars. I think that's the bottom line. The idea is to have everybody in a

school jurisdiction fit into the same mold. It hurts because you're going to have the ones who'll easily be that and the ones who can try and try and try and gain a little step and then six steps backward and they're never feeling like they're good enough. You know, at night I've got the most wonderful speeches composed if you catch me between ten and eleven at night. You spend the day, like this is going to be a quiet day because of the assembly and because so many things are happening in the school and the kids want to be part of the celebrations but then I look at my results reviews. I'm full of speeches about the have-not-ness of this school and the philosophy of the parents and the community being totally at odds with assessment downtown. Whereas there are others who say ah, we don't have to worry about that. I have to boost Alice's [Grade three teacher] ego a bit. She is a wonderful teacher. I know that. I've been in there. The kids just love her and parents just love her but she's not achieving the provincial results with her class. So, I need to say it's okay. I need to be the one that says well this is what we're going to try. The budget especially in this school stops us from doing a lot of stuff. Really basic stuff like getting readers for the kids to take home for home reading because we just can't afford to sink that money in there. So I'm going to tell the superintendent but I've already thought about what he s going to say to me when I say okay give us more money because we just can't work this way. He'll say, well, go out and find business partnerships that will support you. And it irks me because I didn't come into this job to go out and do that. But I will do it if I have to. The problems here are not that visible until you're here for a while, like they're under the surface. Whereas in other schools they just hit you in the face.

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Trying to collect lunchroom fees is just awful. It means phone calls and letters. We also know that if we make concessions, or big enough concessions to some people, then the expectation will be that everybody can have concessions and we can't do that. So, we do a lot of asking for two dollars here and a dollar there and it wears you down. I have to deal with

things like kids not being taken care of, parents who don't get up with their kids in the morning. One child came to school with $106.00 yesterday to spend at the book fair. Well where did she get $106.00? By noon hour she had only $90.00 left and we had to take the money and hold it for her. I phoned home to tell her dad but he's drunk most of the time. She's as attention deficit as they come and not on medication. She's not a violent kid and she's the kind of kid you really wish you could help but you can't help without permission, without some kind of support at home. We've got a kid who won't phone home in the morning if he's forgotten anything because he can't wake up his mom. She takes the phone off the hook and she doesn't get up in the mornings and she doesn't work. I'm pretty sure some kids are abused and it manifests itself in such different ways like the poor little guy whose dad wrote that lunchroom note. I mean you could just feel from that note that this kid's getting yelled at for bringing home his lunch bag. But the board says that the priority is student achievement. So going back to what I said before, I have to find some kind of balance for both priorities.

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There's another school in the district that's doing very similar things as far as curriculum alignment, very similar to what we're doing here. I'm having people not question what I'm asking. I'm having people asking for more and happy with some of the things that are shaping up. Taking the time today to plan a unit for January, it's pretty good. And this other principal who's trying to do the same thing has had nothing but garbage thrown at her, nothing but you're picking on me, you're asking more than I'm willing to give you. You have no right to ask me this, calling the ATA, on stress leave, just a horror story. We're basically doing the same kinds of things but it's how you approach your people. It's the groundwork that you set. It's how much talking that you do before you actually start. It's how much involvement that other people, the people who are actually going to do it, how much involvement they have in identifying the problems and identifying what can happen and what the needs are and how you can address them. And sometimes it's a

heck of a stroke of luck. Perhaps I've had no issues with it because our results are low. I know that that can be a negative thing but in this case it's going to be a positive because it says to everyone you need to do something about it and I don't have to say it. Look at Lori [Grade six teacher] and her assembly. She had the opportunity to develop it herself. I would never have told her what to do. She would have hated me and now she's making plans for next year. She's thinking already and so is Kara [Grade five teacher/school counselor] and she hasn't even done hers yet.

December

Action Fragment: Collyn returns from Jasper and brings back a little bear lapel pin for the secretary. She tells the secretary that she can't manage without her and she knows how much she likes bears.

Sound Bits: Collyn has positive messages for each class she visits; talks about knowing the teachers so much better now and is able to form her own opinions about them; receives flattering notes from parents praising her student focus; admits that she doesn't really care about bears but the secretary does and she cares about the secretary.

Observed Practices: Collyn celebrates the completion of the new kindergarten room; celebrates the success of an assembly led by a teacher who was not confident in her ability to succeed; relationship with the kindergarten teacher is steadily improving; upbeat staff meeting.

Narratives: Anya, the little blonde girl in grade two is coded opportunity and that means her IQ is probably about 60. She's an excellent artist and an excellent athlete. But there's something that's not quite right as far as learning is concerned or at least the traditional way that we do it. When the testing was done last year and the debriefing meeting following the testing, there were definitely some miscommunications and this is the fallout. Mom is from Serbia and she came in on Tuesday morning. She wanted to talk to the grade one teacher whose class her son is in. She was totally livid because last year Anya brought home a reading book and it was somehow

lost. She doesn't believe that her daughter would have lost anything because they searched that house from top to bottom and could not find that book. Bottom line, the book was not returned. They had to pay $4.00 for the book because it was part of a set. This year her son comes home with the book. She is very angry because she feels that the school charged her and accused her daughter of something when it wasn't true. So we had to explain to her that we had more than one set of these books and that the book that Anya did not bring back last year is not this book. And how do you prove it? It's very hard to. Apparently, there were tons of bad feelings last year about this $4.00 that she had to pay for this book. In the long run it would have been far better off to just write it off. But that wasn't done. The school was very tenacious and the money was collected. Mother said that she talked to the principal and the principal was going to do something about it and then that very same day she gets a letter saying she'd better pay. So, she feels that the principal did not follow through with that and that she wouldn't give her any help because she's a refugee. I don't know the connection. Right. That's what she came in for and she was just shaking. So I asked her if she was okay and I invited her into my office. She was not okay. That was the tip of the iceberg. The rest of the stuff has to do with Anya. But what this mother says is, this is not a good school. This is not a good school because of the book. Second thing that she talked about was the report that was written by the psychologist last year. Apparently there are three errors in the first paragraph—three things that she didn't really like and I said that I would write a letter to correct those. But the report was written in February of last year and I'm getting the fallout on December 2nd. The former principal was very adamant about payments for fines, lunchroom fees and so on. That's why I have people sitting here during lunch hour because if they haven't paid, I get them. If you don't pay for a field trip then you don't go. It's like, it's black and white but I'm blurring some of those lines now. We've adjusted lunchroom fees for certain people. If they can't afford a program that costs money, have mom call me, I will do what I can which is basically say no problem and the word's out. That's one of the

things that you have to do to accommodate your clients. My sister teaches math in a pretty ritzy school in the district and she was telling me about this grade five science class where the kids make little motorized cars and how a kit for each child has about five or six dollars worth of materials that they need to have. At her school they just put together a whole bunch of these little kits and a whole bunch of extra things so the kids can make other stuff and sold them for $10.00. Well, all the kids bought them and I'm going, can you imagine this here? Well, it would never work. We'd have half the kids who would, under duress, bring in money. We'd have a few who'd have no problem with that and we'd have those who really can't afford ten bucks in the middle of the month to do this.

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I have all these people phoning me and asking me for names for families that would benefit from some assistance at Christmas. But you have to be very careful how you approach these people. We have so many sad cases. We have 173 families in this school and some of them are just so sad and you know which is the saddest and who will accept this kind of help because some people have so much pride that they don't want be involved. So what I had to do was identify the families and then I phoned them to see if it would be okay to submit their names. But before that I have to guarantee that they're going to get something from these particular agencies. Like the Hill family, they are so poor. Mother pretends everything is just so rosy and wonderful but just a poor, poor job, poor, poor skills, too many kids, just a lot of talking and not much thinking. They are the kind of people who can tell you a darned good story and there's just no substance to it. A lot of it is fabricated because there's just nothing there. The teachers hear a lot of the things about families and when I walk around and look, there are so many ragamuffins who are unkempt and dirty. We've had two kids in Kindergarten whose little brothers, within two weeks of birth, had to have major operations and in both cases there's no dad. In another case, a Kindergarten girl's older brother died, just died, sixteen, probably suicide, but you don't hear that part. We just

see the anguish and there's something missing. Those kinds of things happen in this school. They don't happen in a lot of schools. So, you have to keep an ear open for what's happening for them in their lives. All of the families that I contacted were so happy that I did. Some of them basically just said, oh that would just help us so much. I'm glad I did it.

January

Action Fragment: Collyn copes with an outbreak of lice at the school. One child is infected very badly and the mother claims she cannot look after the problem until the weekend. Collyn telephones the health unit to see if the school can refuse to take the child until the lice is treated. The answer is no but the nurse offers to phone the child's home. Collyn decides not to reveal the child's identity, phones the mother herself and successfully persuades her to treat the child's lice immediately.

Sound Bits: Collyn receives praise from Grade six teacher about the curriculum alignment process; other teachers comment on her flexibility and authenticity; Collyn laughs at her upside down and turned around office—a birthday surprise for her from the teachers.

Observed Practices: Collyn enjoys random acts of kindness initiatives at the school; appeals to parents to pressure the government for more education dollars by setting up petitions for them to sign in the front hall of the school.

Narratives: I think we've made some major changes in work ethics around here. We've gone through some major changes in attitude and we're not finished. I told you that once the secretary learned how to do tables with the computer she's just doing tables for everything and she's much more on task. But maybe it's because I come in here and I'm on task. Maybe it's because Kara [Grade five teacher/school counselor] is busier and not talking to her for an hour every day. At the beginning of the year I thought I was going to pull my hair out here. Now the office looks much better and it really does make a difference. It's had to be one thing at a time. That recycle box

was the first thing I noticed in August when I walked in. It took me until the end of October to get rid of it. I'm not sure how I did that. I just remember walking in there and saying to the secretary, we have got to get rid of this box. It is really not very inviting. I would never have said that in September because she had to get to know me and I had to get to know her. She had to know that I appreciate what she is saying. I think the change happened in conjunction with the improvement in her computer skills. Every time something happened that was good we'd talk about it and you know, I notice everything and I monitor a lot of this stuff. I look at things and we're doing the newsletters and I'd say would you like some sort of graphic over here to make it look better and now there are graphics on everything. It's just basically this is where you get it. You just go into your clipart and here's a cute one. I think it's working. When you work together one person can show another person a tip and then they build on it. Praise is probably the biggest thing. I've been here a few months now and I really care about all of them. I care about Zena [Kindergarten teacher] being on the edge. I care about Alice's [Grade three teacher] mouth hurting. That'll impact on all the things I get to deal with. And it's so much easier to smooth it out before it happens if it prevents it from happening. It's a fine line. Sometimes you have to go one-way or the other. Sometimes you'll go overboard on personal caring. Sometimes you'll go overboard on the achievement. But on the whole both of them have to be priorities. You don't sacrifice one for the other. It's like student safety and student achievement. You have to do both. You can't just do one at the expense of the other.

February:

Action Fragment: Teachers line up before school starts in the morning to talk to Collyn about some little something; teachers are talking more to each other now about how they're doing things and are helping each other work through difficulties.

Sound Bits: Collyn voices concern for a student who has been missing too much school babysitting for siblings; scenarios playing in Collyn's head about budget choices for next year; is listening more, questioning more, because of budget plans; wants to be sure that she's heading in the right direction, given the financial constraints; verbal issues continue with teacher/counselor.

Observed Practices: Collyn regularly welcomes students at the school doors; organizes orientation for student teachers; invites participation by staff in setting new school goals by wallpapering the staff room with large sheets of objectives and measurable ways to achieve them; teacher observations; time consuming phone calls from parents about Fall transfers in and out of the school; begins to notice positive differences in teaching and reporting from the curriculum alignment process; is putting extra effort into ensuring appropriate curricular resources for next year.

Narratives: The other thing that we really have to support in our budget is more technology and perhaps some assistance or some technical support. We're trying to get our report cards on computer and we've had nothing but problems. So far I've had one teacher say, I'm handwriting mine is that okay? And I hummed and hawed for the first week and finally my response was yes. I'm not going to push that one. That's not my war. That's maybe a little battle but that's not my war. This budget is my war and I feel really good about this. Everyone, except Kara, has agreed to it and I was told this morning that she may be looking around for another job if she loses the counseling position. Fine. It's not that I want to take away somebody's support but it just doesn't make sense on our budget to spend money on that. It's basically having a title, more than anything. It's just the title because she never refers to herself as the grade five teacher. Her big concern is that on Wednesday afternoons there won't be a teacher in the office to handle any issues that might come up. And my response was, they can wait. I just cannot see it being called counseling. I've been watching this for six months now and

I've been telling you about it for six months. Her classroom teaching is great, she's a wonderful classroom teacher.

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I really think it's a gender thing. I really do. I think that the way men think and the way women think as far as this budget stuff goes is different. One male principal I know just went ahead and took the money and divided it and probably has things hidden here and there. And I was as honest as the day is long, this is how much this costs us, this is how much this costs us, this is how much this cost us. I wanted the teachers to know where things went in this school and how much something actually costs us. Sure there's no way that you can satisfy everybody but if I had done this on my own it would have been different. I needed to hear how important the resource room is. I needed to hear how important the reading recovery is. I needed to hear that it's really important to get some technological support in this school. I needed to hear that, maybe we're not doing it right in division one and we should focus on Balanced Literacy. There are things in this school that should've been cut a long time ago and never were. There's a perceived need that counseling is really important and I asked what exactly that meant and it meant a buffer between the teacher and the parents. Well, who provides that? I do. It means referring people to social agencies. I do that. Special needs coordination, well, that might be a little bit more work but I've done it before. So, when this school was 450 kids that was a position that really needed to be here but I have not, in the six months I've been here, experienced a real need for it. But I heard from these people that it's important to have that support. So let's put it in. But then let's look at who's delivering it and whether it has to be delivered the way it has been forever. Some of those cuts should've been done before and weren't. But if we had the same amount of dollars, we just would've done the same thing again without having looked at this as closely as we did. We're not up to standard in a lot of ways and we never will be if we continue the way we were. Last week was the hardest week of my life. When you have to take a designation away, that's difficult. When you reclassify

somebody to a different category, it's difficult. I'm the bad guy, so be it. I'd say everyone else is on side, everyone. In this way too it's not just me making the decision. This morning as well, I had a reminder that Kara wants that designation until the end of the year. I think that tells you something....hardest week of my life, actually coming to the decision. When I wrote that article [budget decisions], it was Sunday because Saturday I just thought. To actually have it written down on paper rather than just flowing around and trying to invent different combinations and permeations and trying to make everybody a 1.0 FTE who wanted to be 1.0 and all that kind of stuff had me just basically spinning until I finally sat down and said okay too bad. This is your job and you have to be tough and people are going to be unhappy. My roles and responsibilities are for the kids to be number one and we have to provide for them the best way we can and if it doesn't make everybody 100% happy, that's too bad. Parents included.

March

Action Fragment: Collyn is just starting to review the paper work for staff meeting when a grade three student is reported missing after being sent into the school for using an out of bounds slide on the playground. Collyn searches all of the school's known hiding places to no avail. Secretary phones the lunchroom supervisor who lives directly across the street and who has a pulse on the neighbourhood. She has seen the child heading for home. Since the child's parents both work during the day, Collyn dresses in winter clothing and heads for the child's house, a half block from the school. The child is found huddled and sobbing on a bench in the back yard. Collyn gently persuades the child to return to school where he is asked to telephone his mother and to tell her what has happened. The staff meeting is about to begin and the paper work has not been reviewed.

Sound Bits: Collyn hears that she is known in the neighbourhood as a strong disciplinarian; is thrilled by honesty from grade two teacher stating her preference for no classroom visits by Collyn that day; has personal out of

school conversations with secretary to hear her stories; praises teaching practices of the kindergarten teacher; converses regularly in her office with students about their work; really interested in what students have to say, asks them questions, comments positively on their efforts and writes personal notes back to each of them; secretary listens with pride at the doorway; Collyn comments: "always a mother;" Collyn's house has been broken into and she can't stop thinking about safety concerns.

Observed Practices: Collyn puts time and effort into special request by a teacher; treats secretary to a birthday dinner; Collyn chooses to free up time during the day to observe, listen, and converse with students, teachers, support staff and parents; working to build bridges with teachers; takes much of the paperwork home at night and on weekends; displays children's work on her office door; secretary now brings Collyn fresh coffee.

Narratives: If we don't do something now to make language arts in this school something that's more structured and more goal-oriented, we're going to have too many kids falling through the cracks. I'm not sure that they've been getting quality teaching all the time. I know that I have people who work really hard and do a really good job. With the Balanced Literacy I think it's much more structured and all of our kids will at least receive some of that basic instruction. It's also something that will be consistent throughout all of division one. I know it works. I do because I used to use it and it works. Am I feeling frustrated, yes I am. Every second word out of my mouth has to do with money and I'm sure that everyone is as tired of that word as I am. Because we're in a deficit situation we haven't been able to buy anything this year except that we will go into deficit for this Balanced Literacy. It's trying to introduce new stuff with these very rigid and difficult parameters. Curriculum alignment was very difficult as well and yet if you asked Lori [Grade six teacher] what she thinks of it, she thinks it's wonderful because she's had to read her program of studies three or four times. And she's going above and beyond what the others are doing as far as what kids have to learn. There are people who do know their programs very well, like Alice [Grade three teacher]

for example, she knows it back to front. She just finds that a big piece of accountability.

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Now that we're into the seventh month I know people better. I know the context of their lives a little bit better and you have to adjust for that and you have to try to balance between school life and home life. You have to make some concessions sometimes. You don't compromise what your beliefs are but you can get around some things or give some people different permissions or allowances than you would others. That's made a really big difference, just being around them and they come and talk with me one-on-one more. I have lineups here sometimes in the morning just waiting to speak with me about some little something. And when there's a crisis or there's a little bit of pressure, like these report cards for example, people are helping each other trying to get through some things. They're talking to each other about how they're doing things so that they work.

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Donna [Grade five teacher] is going to Greece with her husband's social studies class for spring break. Our contract says you can't take the day before spring break for personal reasons. Well, I guess you can for business, but for a personal reason you can't. She and her husband wanted me to kind of fudge it and say that we would cover all her classes so she wouldn't have to pay for a supply teacher. I'm a by-the-book person and I phoned personnel and said okay what do I do here? They gave me two choices and one was that the school where her husband works picks up the cost of the day plus the supply teacher or that she herself gives up the salary for the day, benefits, pension, everything and pays for the sub. I gave her the options, which one would you like me to do? These are the only two I can do. She wasn't happy with that because it's going to cost her $333.00 dollars. Well, I'm sorry, but her contract is pretty clear. She even had her husband come and talk to me to see if I would mellow out. I actually made a note about the kind of challenge that made. I think it might affect our relationship but I'm not concerned. If it's

somebody's problem it's hers and not mine. And that's the baggage that I get to deal with and I don't think people recognize that when they go into the principalship that you'll be dealing with a lot of stuff that's happened that's extraneous, that's not within the school.

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This week Kara has offered her counseling time to relieve teachers while they work on their report cards. Does that mean that they think I should be going in and relieving them for half an hour here and another half hour there so they can come and do this kind of stuff? Nobody's ever done that for me when I wrote report cards and no one is going to do it for me when I write performance reviews. But, is this a wakeup call to me that maybe I should be doing more of this covering and more of this going into the classroom and taking on their job to free them up so they can do an administrative task? My feeling is no. If they want to do that kind of stuff they can make their own arrangements. My feeling is that you do report cards after school. Come early in the morning. Working from 7:00 one day is not going to kill you. I'd much rather see Kara do that, though, than do nothing. There's been so many times this year where there's been nothing to do during the counseling time that it's nice to have her do something. And I don't want to sound mean, or nasty or negative but there are no kids lined up outside her door waiting to talk to her. There's just nothing this year. Apparently, in the past they've been lined up right out the door. However, that time is paid for and that time should be, if at all possible, used for something to do with school and if this is going to be helpful to the teachers, fine. I'll go for it. So, she's trying to become indispensable, I guess. I don't think it's working. I think she's burnt her bridges where the other staff is concerned. Our teachers don't use her like a counselor at all. I don't think it's an issue but trying to justify that her job position or the job that she's doing, I guess she must feel a kind of satisfaction. I don't know. She knows what I think. We're slowly building it back. At least we're on speaking terms, which is more than we were for a little while. She hasn't let go, she hasn't accepted that that will be her designation

next year. I don't think she has anywhere else to go because she's not the kind of person who will put together a resume and go out and even seek a job. It's too much work. Is she trying to justify her job now? I guess she is. Is it going to work? I don't think so.

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I think that in a principal's life you need to hear what kids are really doing, the success stories too and Maureen's [Reading Recovery teacher] just been wonderful at sharing. Every one of her students gets to share with me something when they get to a certain level. And other people are starting to do the same thing. Well, this morning has been quite a nice sharing time. It's very uplifting. It makes you want to work that much harder to get that kind of thing happening. I, well, I care. It's important for me to hear about these good things that happen. I could spend all my day on discipline if I wanted to. I can go seek out issues and problems if I wanted to spend my time doing that but I think it's important to celebrate the success. It's probably more important to celebrate the success because then you're really giving attention to the things that you want to happen rather than wasting time giving time and energy and attention to things you don't want to happen.

April

Action Fragment: Every Thursday for two hours, two young brothers have been waiting in the office to be picked up. So the secretary wrote a letter to the parents saying that dismissal time is 2:30 and please pick up your kids. It's in Collyn's name so she signs it. But the secretary saw the problem and did something about it without being told. She felt confident that Collyn would support the fact that it's not the secretary's job to baby sit for two hours after school.

Sound Bits: Collyn speaks to a father who is upset about bad language being used in front of his daughter on the playground; speaks to the students involved as well; discusses recent research on children's learning with staff members; doesn't believe that she has gained the trust of all staff

members yet and may not ever gain it with some but tries to provide a sense of balance; states that her lens has opened more to allow her to see how outside lives have such an impact in the school; expresses sadness at how transiency affects students who have made such headway and now will be leaving the school.

Observed Practices: Collyn arranges (and school must pay for) the repair of a dangerously large hole that has suddenly appeared in the blacktop on the driveway; continues regular walkabouts and visits to the staff room at recess and lunch; arranges immediate counseling for another teacher with serious personal problems.

Narratives: I think I mentioned the last time you were here about Donna's [Grade five teacher] game playing and I'm still concerned about it. She was off for seven days. She went off after I told her she would have to pay for this leave. Her husband, as I told you, challenged me. And then it was almost in retribution, like I'm going to take time off. Not only does it cost the school financially, but we were also in the process of writing our report cards on computer and she is one of the administrators so that meant that for ten days she was not available to do any troubleshooting. She was not available to assist people who needed help and I think in a sense, she kind of thought that she might be indispensable and it was not the case at all and it's to be noted that the teachers on the staff just rallied behind each other. It just goes to show that they didn't have to rely on one person. She came back yesterday, all smiles. She still hasn't received the concession from the superintendent regarding that leave. But I know that that's the big reason why all this happened. I think you have to be ready for that kind of pouting and childishness to occur. But if it happens more than once, or regularly, it will be addressed. It's almost like you're not doing your part to help me out here and she's asking for concessions that could go either way. Having been on trips like that I know that any adult is always a supervisor so I can justify it that way but this should've been addressed in January, not March 16 or 17. That kind of stuff needs to be put in place long before hand and I did mention it to them,

to all of the staff, way back when that this just doesn't magically happen. And they signed a contract, like it or not. I found her rather snippy this morning. I think she's probably a little hurt or let down that she wasn't as crucial as she thought she was. That's part of it. I see people rely on others rather than on her where in the beginning they would always go see her. But I don't think that's going to happen as much anymore. In fact, I don't think it's going to happen at all. Other people recognize it as a ploy as well and they're not all that keen about it. I really feel, though, that the biggest problem Donna has right now is a husband who's pressuring her and it just penetrates everything that she does.

The other game was, of course, Kara playing hers again. She just makes awful comments every so often, now comes the part where I write them down. Kara told me yesterday, that she would be taking one week of stress leave if there is a glitch in the printing of the grade five report card. Is that constructive? She makes comments like that probably three out of five mornings a week. I'm really tired of it. Interestingly, when other people hear her, they roll their eyes. So, I know that I'm not the only one feeling hurt. I just have to accept that that's Kara and tell her to stop. But telling her to stop is not going to help. She has absolutely nobody else to talk to. I don't mind being the ear but I don't like feeling like it's my fault.

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The secretary has shown me more and more things that she can do. She's really flourishing and today we received some rubrics for what secretaries, principals and teachers need to know as far as computing skills and I went over them with her this morning. We both agreed that maybe A6 is not a forte here and that's databases and spreadsheets and so we're going to work on that. It's not threatening, it's let's do this together, it's I know where I can get some help. So different from the tears and the, I can't do that, or walk into the back room. The other thing that I really feel is that there's a lot less discussion of me when I'm not there. At first, I know that there was a lot because I'm quite different from the former principal. And also I think I'm not

as controlling. I know that for sure but I think my expectations are higher especially when it comes to written documentation. I'm also maybe not so quick to rescue some people and maybe they need to handle their own discipline problems. I'm really thankful for some patience. It's a lot better if you just sit back and let people explain things to you and offer them an explanation so they can see what they haven't interpreted correctly. When parents come to see me too, it's basically the same kind of attitude. You have to value that their opinion is their opinion but then you also have to have them explain it to you because sometimes what you think it is, and what they think it is, is not at all what it is. So, being patient, just really drawing it out. It goes a long way towards making good decisions, sound decisions. Sometimes you have to make quick ones and sometimes you don't. Being a mom teaches you patience. It really does. Teaches you diversity. And that things won't always go the way you want them just because you said so.

May

Action Fragment: Collyn attends one on one with the superintendent. The meeting takes longer than originally scheduled and the tone is very positive. She informs him about the have-not situation at the school, the deficit, the grant applications, the changing role of the principal and then reviews her self-evaluation. The superintendent is very pleased with her clear, honest and concise reports. Collyn feels proud and valued.

Sound Bits: Collyn receives compliment from a parent for writing factual, non-emotional accounts of the issues surrounding the schooling of his autistic son; expresses annoyance at a teacher who has spent all morning making personal phone calls about her move to a new house; listens to a story read by the kindergarten children as a group, compliments the teacher and then exclaims, "how can I not be proud?" states in conference with teacher; "I grow too, thanks to you."

Observed Practices: More and more students are visiting Collyn's office to show their work; lots of paperwork to finish with provincial tests;

participates in school's 'weird' day; acknowledges either with a verbal greeting or a wave all staff who pass by her office; works on teacher performance reviews; fills out more grant applications for additional resources; accepts a picture of herself with a huge smile that was drawn by a young child; joins a grade four assembly practice and performs a line dance and the bunny hop with them.

Narratives: I phoned my MLA this week, and invited him out to the school. I phoned him because I received a mail drop last weekend and one of the items was that he can help people complete successful grant applications. I think that's one of the reasons I'd like to get these grant applications printed out at least in the rough before he comes so he can have a look at them and make suggestions. He's agreed to just look them over. I wanted him to send me a sample grant application he's filled out because he was instrumental in getting a basketball court for a school that's targeted for closure in the near future. Someone was successful in getting a grant and I would like to know how to do it and get the ins and outs of it because I think it's the only way this school's going to get ahead. If we just rely on education funding, that's just for the educational kinds of things that are happening in the school, not anything else. Any kind of extras, like library resources, or musical instruments, or technology, we'll have to find on our own. And I call grant applications partnerships because that's where the community's helping you and then of course you give back to the community the benefits that will eventually come out of whatever project it is, such as kids who can read better and therefore will contribute more as responsible citizens later on.

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My mother came to visit me yesterday, the very first time she's ever walked into this school and she thought the school looked absolutely wonderful. She wasn't looking at the carpets, she wasn't looking at the paint, and she wasn't looking at the holes in the wall. She was just looking at the general atmosphere and what it feels like when you walk in which is really positive. I had a spring in my step because I don't see that anymore. I see

people who point out to me the things that need changing or upgrading so that's basically what I see now. I need to get away from it for a little while or maybe just walk into some other schools and put that reality back because I'm so immersed in my own situation. This is the only place I ever go. I don't go to other schools and that's too bad. It's detrimental.

* * *

We're in the throes of placing kids who are special needs funded for next year at this point. We try as best we can to get these kids to go to the sites that are available to them but parents are not necessarily all that keen on sites. I think the issue here is that education is not as valued as it is in other places. If your child had a learning disability, you'd have that child in a learning disabilities program before I could turn around. But the concerns of the parents here are, oh, the friends are here, her sister's here and we live across from the school. Those are the kinds of things that we hear, the reasons why kids are not placed in district sites. It's a different mindset. The educational part is not as valued as the social skills. It's not skills exactly but a child's social life comes first. The priority is the social life, how many birthday parties they're invited to. It's not if they can read at a grade four level if they're in grade five.

* * *

The consultant who was here yesterday to speak with Maureen [Reading Recovery teacher] and me about what kinds of things we can do to get ready for Balanced Literacy next year, is someone I taught with at another school for a number of years. She's just a wonderful, wonderful teacher. So whatever she says I believe and I do. She's excited and passionate about this program and we've done some of the things right so far to get ready. Maureen is in charge and giving someone like Maureen the leadership in that particular program has relieved me of a lot of things, but it's excited her. I can see Maureen as being a consultant for this kind of program in about two or three years. She has those strategies right here and she has the knowledge. Kara will be piloting a new reading program in grade five. The materials

arrived the other day so there's something for her there that will be a challenge and I've mentioned a couple of times, gee, I can see you showing the other teachers how to use this and you can see that there's just a flicker of interest every so often. She's only mentioned the other part of her job about 25 times this week. That's all. Total improvement. Big-time improvement. I believe that there's acceptance, not happiness, but acceptance.

* * *

We just had our staff attitude surveys last week and the teachers have to fill out two different forms, one goes to the principal and one goes downtown. The one that comes to me I get to read and then send off. There are four categories on them like does your principal support you? They don't put their names on them. I had 12 out of 12 returned. Ten out of twelve gave me the highest ratings, two gave me the second highest ratings and I know who they are and there's good reason why they did. I probably would've done the same thing. But I found it a real compliment. Some people wrote comments and talked about how supportive I was of their initiatives and of their thoughts about what they could do to improve student achievement. And I think, boy, I'm doing the right thing. I just felt really good and for eight months I didn't know what they were thinking. You kind of sit there and wait for it to happen and they're joking around and saying aren't you going to buy us something before the staff attitude survey so that we score you really high? I just think there are limits to what I can do too and I have to live with myself and that's probably the hardest person you ever have to live with. When you make a decision, that's my measuring stick, can I live with it? Is it going to keep me awake at night if I don't do something, or if I do something? That's my measuring stick. That's the one I always use. Can I sleep at night? If not, then I didn't do it right and I have to fix it.

* * *

I like doing what I'm doing. And knowing what other people think of me really makes a big difference. It's too bad it had to wait until May for that to

happen. I've been telling staff all along as often as I can how I feel about what they're doing. I think that was the real turning point in my relationship with the secretary. She got to know me as a person. We went shopping to the mall for towels for the custodian's wedding present. I mean, it's not the biggest or nicest mall, but we went into every store and made comments and since then we've gone out again for secretary's week, and you know what, we went to the same place and did the same thing and we had a great time. I understand her better now. I know some of the pressures that she's under and what's important to her, through conversation and watching her shop and interact with things and what kinds of things she looks at and her interests. She's a sewer, she's a quilter and she's a crafter. I can't relate to any of that stuff but I sure can compliment. She made herself a dress that is absolutely to die for. It's not like anything you would find in a store and it just suits her to a tee. I certainly notice those things a lot more than I did before and I make comments, many more than I did before. I think I'm more observant because of it. I ask her to do something and I turn around and it's done. Not always done to the quality that I need but it's done. She does a lot of things very well and I'm starting to recognize that because I've given her the leeway and the jobs. I'm asking her to write letters now for me. I will proofread them and maybe change a few things but I would never have dared to ask her that before.

* * *

For Kara to have an hour to go and do the three jobs she had to do before leaving was far more important to say yeah, go ahead, I'm here, you don't have to worry about it. She's organized all the patrols things and everything else is going without problem. You've got to recognize that she does do a good job while she's here and like everyone else she needs to have some time to herself to do some of these things that are impossible to do at other times. She's having a week from hell. I have to acknowledge it and acknowledging it is half the battle. Saying yeah, I can see that. What can I do to help? Rather than just pretending it's not happening. Sharing that I've

gone through some of those kinds of stuff too. Sharing my response and my reaction. This is an all-female staff basically, and if there were a male at the helm the relationships would be very different. Take someone like Nina [music teacher/librarian] who's going through a ton of personal problems lately. Because I'm female I can approach her, and talk to her, and find out what the problem is and give her some help and get her some help. She has a daughter whose has 25 charges against her in criminal court, who's defiant, on drugs, will not listen to mom, whose peer pressure is tantamount and a husband who says, I'm tired of Bonnie [daughter] and her problems, you deal with it. So she's got all these problems to deal with and I'm helping her work through those things. I would never be able to do that if it were a male. Not the same way. She couldn't have come and cried to a male, I don't think, or if she did it would've been someone quite different. Ben [Grade four teacher] is Ben. He doesn't have any kind of problems that I would have to deal with. He's just a real genuine nice guy. He doesn't ever ask for anything, very seldom does he ask for assistance. If he does, I know it's important so there's never a question. Winnie, the lunchroom lady, told me that in January she received $10 from welfare. She works her buns off at the out-of-school care, she picks up those kids and she's there all the time. She works the lunch hours here and I guess the difference between what she gets paid doing all these jobs that really force her not to move anywhere or go anywhere was $10. If she went on welfare she wouldn't even have to work and she'd be ten bucks richer. And then she told me she had to go to the food bank twice in January to make ends meet. So I upped her salary. I upped Mary's as well so for a dollar more she cleans all the microwaves and makes sure everything is just pristine. And she's just meticulous about everything being just right. She does all these lunches for our kids too and she just slaves every day. They're eking, they're eking their life. Actually, it's basically scraping by. And they all have these commitments.

June

Sound Bits: Collyn admits: "I like this job. It suits me."

Observed Practices: experiences the school's track and field day for the first time; walkabouts with smiles and greetings continue.

Narratives: So these reports just came back from the consultant. I've received comments from the teachers like: this was a great exercise; I would do this again. This particular exercise, I think, was excellent because it gives me a lot of information that I wouldn't be able to collect, really, realistically. It's a third person and an objective opinion and it's someone they all accepted. This was our PD but I'm the one who pushed it. And the reason I pushed it is these teachers are working flat out but are we teaching the right things? That's my feeling. I think every school should do this. Every teacher should have one kick at the can at this in one area every year. It keeps you honest, it keeps you knowing your program of studies, and it keeps you accountable, I guess would be the word. But this knowledge is not for the parents. No, they're more concerned about fights on the way home after school than they are about whether or not the children have learnt certain concepts in the language arts program.

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A parent has just called leadership services downtown and complained about the Kindergarten teacher, saying that she had grabbed her daughter and bruised her arm in November. When I heard the story in November, Zena had taken a pencil out of the child's hand and it has now grown to bruising. I talked to Zena about it and Zena has not touched that kid since. And okay, now, it's gone to bruising. So, that's exaggeration. The other thing that the mom told leadership services and this is what I was more concerned about, was that Zena was rude and arrogant. How do you tell somebody that? Well, you flat out tell them I guess. I just completed a performance appraisal on Zena and Zena is one of those Kindergarten teachers who either you hate her or you love her. Most of my parent population loves her. She is a selling point for our kindergarten in this community. She does things in that classroom with

kindergarten kids I've never seen other people able to do and get the results that she has. All of her kids are beginning readers, all of them. And my performance review for Zena reflected my thoughts. I finished giving her all these wonderful compliments and I said, now there's something else I need to address. Leadership services received a phone call from Mrs. Hogarth complaining about your arrogance and rudeness. Now, what Mrs. Hogarth calls arrogance and rudeness I wouldn't even call that. I'd just call it somebody trying to teach somebody some responsibility and trying to face the consequences of their own actions. In the last couple of weeks, the child missed a field trip to the pool because mom didn't read any of the forms that were sent home. It's not Zena's fault. But, the phone call went and I had to do something about it. So I did. And you know how earlier in the year when we had the other to do with Zena and how long it took to build that relationship back up again? Well, we're back. Not as far back as it was with the daycare issue but Zena is totally deflated after that comment. How would you feel if a parent called leadership services? Now, we're talking leadership services, not even me, complaining about a teacher. The mom also had the nerve to say that she had told me all about this stuff and I hadn't done anything about it. Which is a lie. So, when I phoned Mrs. Hogarth to follow up on it I said, every time you've brought an issue up, I've dealt with it. Every time, I've also asked her if she expected a phone call back from me and she always says no. Basically, I asked her to come and see us when she had a problem. She wasn't happy—she kind of hung up the phone on me. Then, I had to speak to Zena again because I wanted her to know that that's not what I thought rude and arrogant is. But she certainly does have a way and her personality can grate you. She just doesn't acknowledge people when they come into her classroom and her reasoning is, well, I've got 27 kids and I'm going to worry about them and not you. I can see her point but I think it would really mellow things out if she went just a little extra step and tried to be really nice to these people, like not phony but just to say something. As far as rude and arrogant, I just think that's Zena's way. So, is there a personality conflict? I think so.

The bruising is a bunch of you know what, so we're not even going to worry about that one. But Zena is upset and she's gone quiet, quiet, quiet, really quiet. I don't think it would be helpful at this point for Zena to contact the parent. It's best to deal with it through me. I was offering. I asked the mom when would be a good time to meet and she didn't want to. She does this all the time. So I think this personality thing goes back a long, long way and a long, long time ago. She didn't like the fact that during parent teacher conferences Zena didn't gush all over her. And that's just the way Zena is. Our relationship is not where it was before. It's not like you're not supporting me. It's the fact that I'm the messenger and I guess in that sense the messenger has a role to play plus I know something. This really didn't help Zena at all, especially the last couple of weeks of school. I wish I could protect her from everything, but I can't.

* * *

Kara's away today and she took yesterday off because her eyes were swollen, allergies she called them, and today she's away because she fell yesterday in her house. I think she's just kind of at the point where she's cracking. I'm not surprised. Last week, the straw that broke the camel's back was that one of our students wrote a note directed at her. On one side it said F You and on the other side it said something very nasty. Kara was so hurt and should be. I would be too. But this kid was holding up this note and flipping it around. He was suspended yesterday and served an in-school suspension. But I think the fact that she had to share this with me . . . her weekend was ruined, I'm sure. We're talking about a kid who she's really bent over backwards to help. This year can't end fast enough. So this happened Friday, she was out the door and she hasn't returned to school yet and this is Tuesday. I think that there are two things she can do. If I were Kara right now I could wallow in pity or I could do something about it.... I hear every morning for ten minutes about how I've taken her identity away from her. I still hear about it but it doesn't bother me anymore. One day I guess I will say, you'll have to find another school where you can have that identity but it's not going

to be this one. Or find another identity for yourself. I'm not going to say that now because I think she's had enough knocks this year. She doesn't need another one to push her under. The positive thing I shared with her was curriculum alignment, very positively. But Kara always wants to see the glass half empty rather than half full.

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Today, I had to deal with three kids who had a fight on the way home last night at 3:45. I offered to walk them home. Do you want to hear the silly story? It is so stupid. George was playing soccer at recess. He took off his hockey jersey because he was too hot and put it by the soccer post. Blaine ran over it accidentally as he was playing. Then Bobby decided to tell George that Blaine ran over his sweater deliberately and that maybe he should fight Blaine after school and George did. So, we had to listen to them talk like this for forty-five minutes and what do you think the right thing to do is? How do we solve this problem? If somebody told me to do something I didn't think was right, I don't think I would do it. Why do you think? Why was he suggesting that? Do you think he wanted you to be in trouble? Anyway, forty-five minutes of that and I finally said well, you're almost in grade four. It sounds to me like you can't walk across that field by yourself. I'll help you. Then one of them says, my mother's coming to see you at noon today. Oh, good. We can talk about how you can behave and how you can start accepting your own responsibility. I get to solve all the problems. It bugs me, it irks me and it demeans me. I find it so devaluing. I spent forty-five minutes of my day talking about somebody who stepped on somebody's soccer shirt. I went to university for all of these years. I have all this experience and I am at the point there where I am saying things like I was saying this morning. I come to school every morning not knowing what I am going to meet and fully expecting some of this stuff to happen. And I will do it because it's my job but it doesn't mean I like it.

* * *

Saturday night was the big school fund-raiser at the Water Park. Ticket sales were very slow but I think we managed to break close to even. But, guess who was sitting at the door selling tickets on Saturday night from seven o'clock to eight thirty. Me, because the parents just didn't have their act together....but I would have to say that in the end, it was an excellent, excellent fund-raiser. School spirit was just sky-high, at least half to three quarters of our kids were there, but I have never, ever in my life sat at a table selling tickets for a school fund-raiser. And in a sense, how many people would do that? Not many. I have a lot of energy and I enjoyed it, to be very truthful and very honest, because it gave me the contact with the kids in a different venue and in a different way. And I think the parents note that I go that extra mile for this school. I just submitted those grant applications, so that was another pile of work. But I have to go that extra mile and maybe it's my own personality. I just can't turn it off when I go home. That might be a failing of mine but I worried about the Zena problem all weekend. How am I going to approach this? Usually I can kind of mull it over. It takes me about three hours of being mad and then I start stepping back and looking at things much more rationally. Like, is Zena arrogant and rude? Maybe she is. And when you start looking at it like that rather than defending, defending, defending, you see things a bit differently. I told her it's not something I want to bring up and wave at her or whatever, I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to contact the parent and follow up a third time. That would be just a little over kill. I'm just really sad and disappointed that it happened when it did but there's nothing I can do about it. I can think about it for six and seven hours on a Saturday but it's not going to change it. So, it's just moving ahead, mulling things over and moving ahead. I think it's personality. I know a lot of principals who can just turn it right off. At least, they say they do and most of them are male. It's a different approach to them. I only know a few males who worry about things like I do. You set a precedent and then after that people expect that of the principal. It's interesting that nobody else takes the responsibility. The inequity is because as the principal, the buck stops with you. So you have to be able to shoulder

other people's burdens as well as your own. But I worried all weekend about Zena. The stuff she's done with this kid is truly amazing. Really. But I also know Zena has a lot of different issues that she's dealing with. But these people don't know that. As for me, I don't think it's a shocker for these people. They've had a year to get used to me and I'm not that bizarre. I don't think that the principal should change to accommodate the parents because they're used to somebody sitting behind a mound of paperwork and I don't think that a person should sit behind a mound of paperwork because that's the way the guy before them did it. I think you have to be yourself and if you want to worry about people, I guess you do. I couldn't imagine trying to be like someone else. I know that some other people who sat in this office did nothing but discipline all day long. I hate that. I told them I hate it, but that's part of the job.

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I truly believe in seeking a balance in life. I know that when I was going through some trauma, people went the extra mile to protect me. So, I will consider bringing in the personal life to the picture. Melanie [Grade two teacher] has this brand new five year old, who has temper tantrums like you wouldn't believe and it's wearing. She needs to be home but she also needs space from that kid once in awhile. You've got to consider that when she says can this person work for me while I go with my husband to Phoenix for a couple of days? Yes, of course. And I think that's where my response to things would be a little different from somebody else. I know principals who, when their school has early Thursdays, their teachers cannot put their big toe out the door before 3:30 p.m. We do our staff meetings at lunchtime so that they can put their big toe out the door at 2:30 if they want. You know, really, what's the sense of making teachers sit in here and look at each other for an hour. We've done the PD, we've done the staff meeting, and to them it's a matter of principle now. I know a principal who has twenty mad teachers because he's watching over them all the time. He's not gaining anything. He's cracking the whip over this thing and he's always complaining about it and yet

is he getting anything from his teachers? I think I'm getting far more with my attitude by saying, why don't you just go home and do your report cards for an hour? You'll have some peace before the kids get home from school. I guess you have to put yourself in their places and with their constraints.

Eaton School

Exiting off of a major thoroughfare, I drove past a small but very modern shopping center and turned onto a quieter street. Surrounded by large contemporary houses with lush and beautifully groomed lawns and shrubbery, I enjoyed the tranquility of the drive. Eaton School is situated in the midst of this affluent middle class neighbourhood, and shares extensive parkland with a Catholic elementary school.

Eaton School, an award winning, state of the art facility, opened about a decade ago and presently houses approximately 475 students. A very low percentage of special needs students are fully integrated into regular classrooms, and French as a second language is offered to students in Grades four to six. Eaton School has a history of consistently achieving very high test scores, and there is also an especially active parent council in operation.

The school handbook reveals the belief that "education is a shared responsibility between teachers, students, parents and the greater community. Through active cooperation and dedicated participation by everyone involved, maximum opportunities for successful, rewarding learning experiences are provided." Also detailed in the handbook is a list of the school's priorities for the next three years, as determined by input gathered from the community, parents, students and staff. As well, there is a page dedicated to outlining the school's homework policy as a way to reinforce curriculum concepts, instill good working and study habits, encourage independent study, and give parents an opportunity to become more involved in their children's learning.

The atmosphere at this brightly coloured, well-lit school is one of order and efficiency. A central library, which is bordered by spacious computer learning areas, connects the two academic wings to the music room, the gymnasium, and the administrative offices. The large main office with two secretarial stations separates the principal's office from the rest of the school.

A big picture window in the principal's office overlooks the area's manicured greenery.

Introducing Lenore

Graduating from University with a major in Special Education, Lenore began her career teaching trainable mentally handicapped students for the same large urban school district where she remains today. After six years of classroom teaching, she became the principal at a school facility for trainable mentally handicapped adults. Two years later, she accepted a position at the board office as an education/behavior consultant.

Following a brief stint as an assistant principal, Lenore spent two years as a principal before being appointed to the role of "principal at large" for the district. Prior to her present administrative position, Lenore was the principal at an elementary/junior high school for seven years.

Married, and with a teenage daughter at home, Lenore is an avid runner who strives for a balance between her personal and professional lives.

September

Action Fragment: Lenore presents a lapel pin, designed with children, to each teacher and she arranges to have a pay by cup coffee machine and a water cooler installed in the staff room. These are ideas she brings from her previous school, which she believes are symbols of her willingness to support staff and add to their overall comfort.

Sound Bits: One staff member tells the water cooler installer that it's a waste of money; Lenore reads to various classes who have accepted her offer; voice is very expressive and dramatic; uses seating plan to address students by name; proposes to hire two teacher interns using excess funds from the previous year; volunteers to supervise at the school bus twice a week; tells teachers that she will visit their classrooms regularly; speaks formally to grade six classes about behaviour expectations.

Observed Practices: Lenore uses a large white board in the staff room, which is designed as a weekly calendar, to give teachers an overview of happenings at the school; a second white board is used by all staff for messages and comments; Lenore visits briefly with teachers in the hallways, staff room and office; interacts regularly with the vice-principal; posts appointment schedule for teachers to sign for one on ones; keeps track of which classes she visits; continues with previous school routines; looks into artist in residence program; sets up interviews for hiring interns and includes a teacher representative; arranges a budget information meeting with the school's longtime secretary.

Narratives: At the end of last year, the former principal had not made any decisions about who would teach the combined one/two class. So the teachers left for the summer. The one thing she did do was to approach the three grade one teachers and ask if any of them were interested in doing the combined. Well, none of them came forward. So, they all went away for the summer not knowing who would get it and probably speculating that it either would or wouldn't be them based on, and I believe their speculation was based on how long had they been here, where they were on the seniority totem pole for the school, or where they perceived themselves on the seniority pole for the district, and whether they had had that kind of assignment before, that sort of thing. Anyway, I came here in August and was faced with the fact that we didn't have enough kids to have three grade one classes and three grade two classes, so we needed a combined one/two and I had to assign this to one of these three teachers. So I met with the vice-principal and we talked about the process, talked about possibilities and I decided the best way to approach it was honestly and openly with all of the teachers involved. So I called them all into a meeting, opened it up for discussion, and they all had reasons why they thought it should not be them. Of course, none of them expressed reasons why they thought it should be one of the others and that was good. But I said to them at the meeting, "Clearly this is a decision I need to make. None of you are coming forward

saying that you want this position and I am going to need to come up with a rationale for how I will assign it. So, I will get back to you by the end of the day." But I did say to them that my decision would not be based on seniority, that I would be looking at previous experiences and previous assignments; that I did perceive this one/two combination to be a more challenging assignment than a straight grade one or a straight grade two; and that part of my thinking was that we all need to share the challenges as well as the successes of our school, and I left it at that. They all had opportunity for input and all of them spoke, and they all had the opportunity to ask some questions. One of them wanted to know all about the whole seniority issue and I said, "Well, my belief is that we should not make decisions based on how long someone has been somewhere, that the challenging jobs should not always go to the low man on the totem pole." I also said that I thought it was unfortunate that we perceived that this was a negative assignment and that somehow we need to change that because if we perceive that then it's no wonder our public perceives that. I also said that I really think we need to work on this as a staff, talk about how we can change that perception so that this will not be viewed as a negative assignment and so that people will look as positively on that assignment as they would on any other. So, I left it there and went away with the vice-principal to thrash it through again and make the decision. I gave it to the teacher who, in fact, was the most senior here but had never had a combined grade assignment, and she was very upset. Basically, when I told her that she would have this assignment, she asked for time to think about it. I was taken aback a little bit by her request, but I didn't say anything because my question to her would have been, what do you mean by that, what do you mean you need time to think about it? So, I thought no, I'll just leave it. Obviously, this is a surprise. It is a bit of a shock to her and she needs time to think and she'll come to me when she's ready. She came to talk to me the next day and wanted clarification of a few things. She presented herself very rationally, not angry, just really wanting to understand the basis on which the decision was made, and what supports were going to

be in place for her. She wanted me to understand her concerns about being given the position. Also, she wanted to know what her options were, so I told her. I was prepared for that question, and in fact I had checked with my staffing consultant about what her options were. I suggested to her that if she wanted to verify those options or to get further information, she could phone both the ATA and the personnel staffing consultant, and she did both of those things. Basically from what I could tell, she was very honest with me and she told me she had phoned them and she did say that both of them had advised her that while, yes it was a combined grade it was not an 'unusual' nor an 'unreasonable' assignment by any stretch of the imagination. The staffing consultant told her about some of the assignments out there. You know, here as a school, and I think this is fabulous, I really respect what the staff's decision has been for combined grades to make them a little more palatable for teachers and parents and students. What they've done here if they're in the position where they have to have a combined grade, they put only students in that grade, in that class, who are independent workers. They don't put any special needs kids in there, they don't put any behavior problems in there and they try to keep that class the lowest enrollment in comparison to the other classes of the same grade. The teachers get together and basically select the kids that are put into that combined grade. So, the two combined grades that we have already are wonderful classes with lovely, lovely kids. Now enrollment wise, they're not significantly smaller than the others, maybe one or two kids at the most but nevertheless, they've got delightful children in there and children that are all functioning quite well within their grade level. Then, of course, this year we've given intern support to those classes, so they've got that. Now we can't necessarily guarantee that will happen every year. We've also offered the teachers unlimited attendance at workshops that would help them deal with this particular challenge. But anyway, the teacher behaved professionally throughout the whole thing. She was certainly upset. She wished that she had known sooner so that she could have had time to adjust but also, had time to think over the summer about plans. And I agree.

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Last week, a parent dropped in, and she wanted to make an appointment to come and see me at another time. When I asked her what she wanted to meet with me about she said: "Oh, I just wanted to get to know you." So I said: "come on in and we'll look at the calendar." She had her son with her and he was about 2 or 3 years old. Well, he basically walked around the office touching everything and then he went over to the Smartie machine and the Smartie machine doesn't dispense Smarties without coin usually but if you turn it, it will put a few out. So he turned it several times and got a few Smarties each time. Finally, I thought, she's not saying anything to him and this is inappropriate. I mean, the candies are here for people to eat and certainly I don't mind that at all but I would like the courtesy of either being asked "do you mind if" or "may I have" or, you know, that sort of thing or offering myself. So when she didn't say anything I did, and she took great offense to that. She then wrote me a letter this week, sent me a bag of candy and told me that she thought I was very rude and that why do I have this candy around if not for children to eat. She couldn't understand why I was so upset about the whole thing, and asked me to please accept this bag of candy so that in future when children like my son come to your office that you can give them this. I got this first thing yesterday morning when I came to work. It was in my mailbox and I stewed about it all day. I was quite offended by it because I certainly don't consider myself a mean person. I guess I felt that if the parent isn't going to say something about the behavior of their child in someone else's office, then I felt I needed to say something because she obviously wasn't going to say anything. So I was offended that she could perceive that as rude. But then I thought did I overreact to this whole thing? Well, maybe I did, I could have said nothing. I mean a few Smarties big deal. So anyway, I thought I would leave it for a day or two, to let it settle because I don't want to overreact again. And I thought given my state of mind in terms of not being sure what to think about this, I thought I would just sit on it and then decide what I was going to do. Then, after school, I had this

confrontation with her because she had parked where this pylon had been moved and then she tore a strip out of me because we had put out this new crosswalk and it reduced parking spaces and what did I think I was doing and this was stupid and on and on and on. I just stood and listened to her and then I said you know the primary purpose of this crosswalk is to minimize the risk to children. It's a safety issue, and yes, while it has reduced the number of parking spots that is not our primary concern. So I said, in the meantime would you please move your car? She did and then I came back into school. I didn't touch the other issue. I thought I'm not in the state of mind to do this. I should have remembered that thought later when she came into the school looking for the vice-principal. He wasn't here, so I said to her, stupid me, I said to her, could I see you for a few minutes? So she came into the office, closed the door and I said I really feel like we've gotten off to a poor start. I told her I would like to just resolve this and start again. I said, clearly you have a perception of me that I think is incorrect and I'd like to try and change that. Well, she tore into me about how rude I was with her son and how offended she was and I thought I'm not putting up with this. I said: " well, you know since you've brought that up, I just want to be perfectly frank here." I said: " I think you were rude. This is my office and I expect that it will be treated with some respect and some courtesy." Well, then we got into this discussion about how she doesn't perceive this as my office. That as an employee of a public school board, this is a taxpayer's office and she pays big taxes. I couldn't believe it. So I just listened to her rant about this not being my office and then I said: "if it makes you more comfortable perceiving this as the 'principal's office,' so be it. But, nevertheless, the things that are in this office, some of them are mine. The Smartie machine is one of them and I reserve the right to determine who gets Smarties and who doesn't. You said nothing to your son even though he continued to take Smarties without being offered and without asking. Since you chose not to teach him what was appropriate, I chose to do that for you." Anyway, I mean it was not a good conversation. I tried to be very calm, very rational but I was honest and I told her what I

thought. Then she got into this thing about parking patrol and how I had ruined the school by bringing these people in and that they were really rude. I reminded her that the parent patrol had been in place already. I said: "this is not a new group. They have been working at the school for some time now. The only thing new here is the crosswalk. You know, I can't remember what she said. We were talking about the crosswalk and the fact that it was unsafe, and that it was put in place to try to increase safety for the children. I said: " yes, it's true parking has been diminished but that is a fact that, you know, we can't change." Then she said something about it being clear to her that I am not prepared to listen, that I am going to do what I feel like whether parents agree or not. I just went quiet and I said: "where did you get that from? What is it that I have said that has led you to that conclusion? I'm certainly willing to listen to concerns but you and I may not agree on certain things. I will explain to you why I don't agree, but I hope that we can at least respect each other and realize that there are different points of view here, and that yours is one, mine is another, and I'm not necessarily going to be swayed by your opinion if I don't agree with it." Anyway, she just talked and talked and talked and I could barely get a word in edgewise and I just sat there and let her rant. Anyway, I guess the conversation came to an end at some point. Oh, and she said that she had made this appointment with me. I had thought it was for Tuesday, that's what I had marked on my calendar, but she didn't show up on Tuesday. Then yesterday, Wednesday, she phoned to say that she couldn't make the appointment that she had made for that day. So we had really gotten our wires crossed somehow. Anyway, she told me that she had phoned about not being able to be at this appointment and I said: " well yes, I did get that message and I appreciate you calling. However, I thought our meeting was for Tuesday. But," I said, "certainly if you had come in today, I would have been happy to meet with you." I asked her if we should still meet or would she like to make another appointment. She replied that she thought everything was fine now. I said: "it's really unfortunate that we've started out this way and I hope that in future we can meet under better circumstances."

Yes, she said, I'm sure we can, and she was very pleasant. Then later, I get a call from Leadership Services downtown. She has called down there to complain about me. The person that she called is someone that I know very well and he's very levelheaded. Anyway he gave her some suggestions because she said she wasn't prepared to deal with me. He advised her that in some cases schools where people have felt that they just could not work together for some reason, they designated someone else, some other administrator, and he said certainly I could do that if both of us agreed that it might be better. And she said well, you know, what if I just want to complain though about the principal. He informed her that the principal's immediate supervisor is the superintendent and that she was certainly welcome to call him if she wished and so whether or not she has called I don't know. So that was my day yesterday. It was just bizarre. It was all of these things one after the other. You know, at one point in our conversation, I did say to her that I'm really sorry that she has that perception of me because I don't think that's accurate and I told her that I was upset by this incident and perhaps I did overreact and for that I am sorry but, you know, let's move on here. And I just did not feel that she was prepared to do that for whatever reason. I think she is just angry with a number of things and this was just kind of the tip of the iceberg, I guess. You know, you rack your brain, did I mishandle that and, you know, I hate those kinds of things, not that I avoid them but I do try to mediate difficulties. I do try to compromise or come to some resolution that's satisfactory and I just wasn't successful with this one for whatever reason. I went and talked to the Vice-principal and he basically said that in the past, when the former principal saw her coming, the principal would go and hide. She's demonstrated that she's a difficult parent to deal with both at the classroom level and at the administrative level in the past, and now she's saying the parent parking patrol is treating her very rudely. But she's violated time and time again the same kinds of things and she's not getting it. One of the parents on patrol told me that this lady had stopped in the middle of the street one day, so she approached her politely and asked her to move. This

lady then accused the parent patroller of racism. So, I mean, how can you win with someone like that.

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I was talking to a colleague about how they came up with the symbol that represented their school because there is no symbol here and there's no slogan or anything like that. It really surprised me. When I look at all the other new schools, they seem to have gone through that process as part of their whole identity. The other thing that really hit home is that over the years they've had different T-shirts here and there's never been a consistent design or even color. The same colors have been used interchangeably over the years. But nothing really consistent, and that surprises me.

October

Action Fragment: Staff votes to have the coffee machine removed stating that volunteer parents are offended at having to pay for their coffee and that it makes the school look cheap. Lenore is disappointed that it hasn't worked, claiming that it was very successful at her previous school.

Sound Bits: Lenore acknowledges a healthy surplus in the budget but doesn't have the history of where the monies came from; listens to child's comment on scarecrow: "her face is white because she has just seen a ghost; talks about successful assemblies at former school; invites the school secretary to participate in the professional development day but secretary chooses to do something more relevant to her specific job; offers to cover classes for short periods for teachers to have some relief time; sends out a memo to teachers offering her services for a one-hour coverage of their classes to allow them some extra time to catch up on marking or to work on report cards.

Observed Practices: Lenore proudly admires the human size scarecrows made in a cooperative art effort by the grade two and grade six classes and displayed around the common areas of the school: leaning against a pillar, sitting on a chair in the hallway or at a computer; visits

classes and chats with teachers at recess; performs with the vice principal in a comical play at the school assembly, which is open to parents as well; confirms school professional development day to focus on the link between computers and the curriculum; tackles large amount of paperwork; attends a seminar titled "Investment in Excellence," given together by another district principal and a school counselor; meets with the technology consultant that the school has hired; attends a parent council meeting.

Narratives: I've now met with almost everyone, individually, except for a few people, and I've put some feelers out as to what would people think about certain things like school assemblies, and I really got some extreme reactions. Some were saying, yes I think we really need that because I think that is something that is really lacking, the whole school celebration. For example, one of these school documents says that each child has the ability to learn that achievement of growth will be recognized, celebrated and reported. Recognized and celebrated, I'm not sure—reported, yes. I see recognition through displaying of student work, and it's mostly art kinds of work, which is typical. But celebrate it, I don't see. So these are the written beliefs and yet I don't see how the beliefs have necessarily been translated into actions on a whole school kind of basis. I think on an individual basis, it might be happening, but I don't see that where the whole school is involved. It's like the track team we've been working with. We practice three mornings a week and we're just so impressed with the kids. We started with seventy-some kids and I bet we still have fifty, and they've been coming out consistently three days a week. Yet we haven't had anything to recognize them. We have our first race tomorrow—first and only race tomorrow. What's kept them coming? I think we've done a good job coaching. I think they've enjoyed it but we work them hard and they've all improved immensely. It's amazing. But we need to take them to an assembly and have them stand up in front of everyone. That whole sense of community is something that I really feel I need to pull together and I'm feeling more and more comfortable about it

as they're getting to know me and me them. I'm trying to do some of these things because we've got so many neat things happening here.

* * *

When I presented this idea to the Vice-Principal, he was very skeptical and said that he didn't believe that the staff would go for it. He has admitted to me before that he is a very cautious person himself, that he's very reluctant to try things that are new and different. He also admitted that he perceives this to be an area that he needs to grow in. He believes that as a result of his cautious approach, perhaps there have been opportunities that he, or the school have missed out on. Anyway, he felt that the staff would perceive that they don't need to improve student achievement and that this particular piece of equipment [classroom sound system], if they didn't need to improve student achievement, why would they bother with getting this piece of equipment. It's a real challenge to try and change that way of thinking because people get to the point of, what more can I do? Why isn't that good enough? Our numbers are great! So why do we have to worry about improving? Anyway, that's hard to go against. So after talking to the vice-principal, I thought okay, well, he knows this staff better than I do. So we put a trial system into a classroom with a teacher who was new to the school and might not have any sort of preconceived beliefs about things like that, and who was receptive to the idea to see if she would buy into it, see if she sees some value. Then when it was presented to the staff, the response was overwhelmingly positive. I'm sure there were some who probably could care less, but I would say the majority thought it was a fabulous piece of equipment and wanted to know when they could have one for their room. So I was very surprised. I think the one teacher's endorsement helped, but I also think the other teachers could see the value for themselves. What we're going to do now is share the trial equipment with other classes – let them each try it for maybe a day or two, to see how comfortable the teachers are with it because while the sound is great you do have to either wear a headphone or wear a lapel mike. It's a different way of doing things. You have to remember

to shut the amplifier off when you leave the room or when you want to talk individually with someone because it does pick up everything. I'm hoping that we will have enough money in our budget to buy at least one, if not a couple, this year. Then I'd like to go to the parents and present it to them and show them the system and see if they would consider their next fundraising project perhaps as going towards supporting this system. One of the best advantages that the teachers at my former school found was that it saves your voice. At the end of the day your voice is much less tired, and you have more energy because you don't have to rise above the noise, whatever those noises are in the classroom. Here's a piece of technology that truly does impact learning for children because we know that you have to hear in order to learn.

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For me, if I am fair when I discipline students, then first of all, I really examine the situation. I hear the stories, if there's more than one story, and I've tried to understand how this occurred. I try to be empathetic in terms of understanding how those things can occur either accidentally or deliberately, so that I acknowledge for them that I understand the context in which this happened. You are angry because . . . you know, I can understand you are angry because he took something of yours but that does not give you the right to turn around and physically hit him. So, being fair: understanding, being empathetic, listening, but also adding the opportunity to teach and to reinforce what those expectations are. Being fair means being heard, being listened to, given the opportunity to speak, to tell their side of the story, and being treated the way I would want to be treated. Being treated in a way that is respectful, in a way that is courteous even if they're being punished, so that at the end of it all, they will understand why they're being punished. They still might not like it, but hopefully, a child will leave here understanding why this consequence is in place.

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I've given teachers a slush fund of $100 each and I've said to them: "it doesn't matter whether you're part-time or full-time, you're each going to get $100. You may not all spend your $100. Some of you may spend way more than $100 and some of you will spend less and that's fine. But you're each going to get the opportunity to spend $100 on those things that you think are worth spending the money on." If you start getting into, well, you know, we'd better give this full-time person more, but this full-time person maybe doesn't buy as many books for their classroom, or they don't buy stickers for the kids, I mean, at what point does it become fair. So, some decisions I'll make on the basis of ensuring that I can rationalize them in some way because the questions will be asked. If it seems fair to me, if I think it over as clearly as I can in my mind and think of all the possible scenarios and possible questions I'm going to be asked, I'll come out with something I believe is fair, and hopefully, I won't be blindsided by something I haven't thought of at the time. However, if I am, then I might change the decision on the spur of the moment.

November

Action Fragment: A guest speaker arrives to present to one of the classes. Lenore has not been notified. She informs the teacher of her desire to stay informed as to who is in the school and why. Two substitute teachers arrive for one job. The confusion is because of one teacher who phoned for a substitute and then didn't need one but forgot to cancel. The teacher offers to pay but Lenore says the school will cover the costs—fortunately, the school has a surplus budget.

Sound Bits: Lenore shares in teachers' excitement about the start of the artist in residence program; expresses pleasure in novice teacher's risk taking with the medieval festival; laughs at secretary's comment about her: "we won't be able to get her back into the office—she's out in the classes so much!" Teacher adds: "she gives directions very well. She was in my room this morning."

Observed Practices: Lenore visits classrooms; attends grade five medieval festival, to which parents are also invited; settles two issues of extra people in the school; meets with policemen about broken glass from a BB gun on the outside of the school.

Narratives: I keep track of classroom visits. I keep track of cards and little things and notes that I give to people because I want, certainly, through a period of months and ultimately the year, to ensure that I haven't left anyone out. I want to be able to go back and remember if I've done what I needed to do. When I'm looking at classroom visits, I need to know, who I have and have not seen and who I need to make sure I stop in and see. I certainly want people to feel that I am making an effort to get to know everyone quite equitably and not be perceived as having favorites. I think it's natural that that happens, and maybe it has happened already to a certain extent. I can already feel some affinity for me more from some people than from others, although I'm making a conscious effort to make sure that I spend time with everyone. When I have lunch with the staff, I try not to always sit with the same people, but try to move around so that I get to know other people and they get an opportunity to get to know me. One hopes that they want that as much as I do, but you're not always sure what the staff wants. Having said that, I'd like to believe that my actions are not contrived. These are things that I do, that I enjoy doing. I like to have those things done for me so I believe that other people like to have those things done for them. I like for people to acknowledge the things that I do and I believe that staff like that so I'm not doing something that is foreign to me or would be unusual for me to do. So, in that way, I don't think it's contrived because it really reflects part of my personality. Certainly I've worked for lots of administrators who don't do those kinds of things, and in some cases, I've never felt that I've gotten to know them. The old-style administrator that I started with as a young teacher was someone who sat in their office and we rarely saw them, and the only time we saw them was when there was some kind of issue. I don't remember them ever stopping in to visit my classroom or walking around the school ground.

The job was very different then, or the way the person did the job was certainly different than the way I perceive I do my job. But there still may be some administrators who think that's the way to do the job. I think one of the things that's really important to me in terms of establishing trust and credibility is to get in there, to be a front-line person. There is nothing that I will ask of the staff that I won't do myself. For instance, if I'm asking them to take on some extra-curricular activities, I'm taking on extra-curricular activities as well. I'm putting in some time at lunch, before school or after school, to do these things. If I'm asking them to sit on committees, I'm on committees. I'm not on all of them obviously, but I'm doing that and I'm not always in a leadership role. The track team is a good example of that. We have four coaches, and I am one coach. We're all out there as equal partners. We share ideas, we share strategies, and we share our knowledge and our skill. I don't believe I'm any more skilled than anyone else, but I think I have something to offer.

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At the school council meetings on a regular basis, the agenda as the chairperson outlined is pretty typical. There's a school report that is given at each meeting, and I share that role with anyone else from the staff, who would like to present something to the parents. For example, at the last meeting the vice-principal had done some research on basketball hoops so he talked about that item specifically. One of our teachers wanted to present the artist in residence program, which was endorsed by the rest of the school staff, to seek financial support from the parents. And then I presented a couple of other items, so it was a shared role, and will be in the future as well. But apart from that, our role at the meeting really is to listen and to provide information, and perhaps advice, to what the school council brings up. It is their meeting and we are there as members just as anyone else is.

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I've been talking with the grade six teachers a little bit about student involvement in this school and leadership, and we need to have a meeting to talk further about that. I would like to see a more visible student role in this

school and the teachers who I've spoken with, I would say for the most part, the three grade 6 teachers are supportive of that, particularly if I take it on. I see a role for the teachers to play in terms of encouraging involvement and talking about local government and all of those things. But I see it as kind of a separate, perhaps student council/principal's council, you know, something like that where I would meet with them and talk about issues. We had this at my former school, but it was mainly at the junior high level. We had grade six representatives and they represented the elementary population but it was much more of a junior high focus. I think that typically because you've got these kids up until grade nine you tend to, somehow, not see the potential as much for kids to be involved in local government. And yet, at elementary schools, there is great potential, and different schools are doing different things to really take advantage of that potential. So, we talked about that and we started to build in more and more elementary school involvement. I believe very strongly that if you trust people to do things, and perceive them as being reliable, responsible, and so on, they will act that way. We had never built that in for them for whatever reason and in fact, my feeling was that they were not acting as though they were trusted, as though they could do things. We needed to change this perception, so we did. We had a monthly assembly and the grade sixes organized the whole thing. And, you know, they worked in groups and they did an excellent job. At this school we don't have monthly assemblies. The current practice is to have a few assemblies a year, with the grade sixes doing the Remembrance day and the year-end assemblies. Certainly, that's one thing I would like to change. Ideally, I would like the teachers to realize that this needs to change. And some of them do already, so I'm hoping that the ideas forthcoming from one another will be more readily accepted and embraced than if I said, you shall do this, we've got to do this. I'm hoping through all of this that the staff will be the catalyst for some of these things happening but if in fact it doesn't come forward from them, I'm certainly not shy to put my own ideas forth as a member of the group. This will be part of the process of examining our strengths, and looking at needs. I

think those seeds have already been planted so I feel confident that some of these things will come forward.

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I did meet with the former principal and she highlighted various things for me about the school, any issues or concerns or directions the school had been going in and are still continuing. Then we basically talked briefly about each of the staff members, information she felt was important for me to have, and she highlighted certain things that I would need to continue to support, or that I would need to perhaps monitor. I did the same with the new principal at my former school. Certainly, I prefaced my comments, as did the principal who was here, with this is history, based on your own perceptions and you may not find it to be the case at all as you work with these people. I think that there's value in doing that but I don't believe that it has impacted necessarily on the way I've acted. But the kinds of things that I felt confident saying to the new principal are things like these people are the ones who are influencing each other and it may be a positive influence or a negative one depending upon what the situation is. I could see, for example, at my former school, there was a teacher who'd been at that school for many, many years and who was really showing signs of being tired and was quite negative, but a solid teacher, not creative, not high energy, I mean, didn't volunteer for things, but did what had to be done. Then two new teachers arrived, one who was a veteran teacher and one who was a new teacher but the three of them were becoming really tight and you could see signs of rigidity in all of them. You were starting to see the same responses and they were really influencing each other. So, one teacher's ideas were being confirmed by the ideas and the behavior of the other two. The one I worried most about was the young teacher who was becoming less and less flexible all the time, and how unfortunate. Again, a good teacher but really rigid and only having taught for two years, and this wasn't something that I would have picked out when I interviewed her. Anyway, those kinds of things I felt comfortable sharing with

the new principal because I didn't feel that it was me who was impacting that. I felt that it was the influence of one another.

December

Action Fragment: Lenore takes over a grade one class for a printing lesson and a gym class. This action results from Lenore's offering each teacher one hour of relief time to work on report cards and from her desire to spend more time in classrooms.

Sound Bits: Lenore welcomes opportunities to work with individual students. She stresses the importance of examining some of the challenges faced by teachers and she believes that this enthusiasm for teaching increases her credibility as an instructional leader.

Observed Practices: Lenore continues class visits; admires art work displayed on the walls in hallways; meets with parents who want their child placed in an LD site but the child doesn't qualify; redirects the responses to the vice-principal who knows the family much better; teaches classes to provide relief time to teachers.

Narratives: At staff meetings one of the things that I try to do is model the techniques that I believe good teachers use with children. Sometimes I tell the staff that I want to use this deliberately because I want you to put yourselves in some situations that you ask kids to do all the time. We need to be empathetic educators. We need to understand that when we ask kids to reflect in their journals, it's not easy for everyone. Sometimes I'm very conscious of using a particular process because I want to model to the staff that this is a process that I think has value for them and it makes them more empathetic with what they do. When I look at staff meetings and what I try to do and it lengthens the meeting but I try to do some kind of reflective exercise with the staff. I pose a question and ask them to respond on a certain process that we've done. For example, at the last meeting, I used a particular process to generate our supervision schedule this year, whereas prior to this year the administration had simply slotted everyone into spaces. At my previous

school, we developed a process whereby we all slotted ourselves in and it worked quite easily, but there weren't as many people, so everyone had to do so many supervisions. Well, the same thing is true here but it's a much larger group to work out so it took a long time to do this. I then asked the staff at the next meeting for some feedback: what did you like about this process? What did you not like? If we were to do this again, what suggestions would you make to improve the process? They had a chance to respond individually, just to talk and then they did small group responses. At the first staff meeting, we'd only been in the school a few days basically when we had our first meeting, the reflection was: what is one thing positive that has improved for you already this year and if someone else was responsible for that have you told them about it? Have you acknowledged the fact that they were responsible? Have you thanked them? Here we complain that we rarely get any positive feedback as teachers and yet how often do we ourselves give positive feedback except to children? We don't give it to other people very much. So it was quite interesting. I had a number of people come up and say thank you, we need to do more of that. We need to acknowledge and recognize those people who do help us and I had a number of people come and say, you know, it's you. I want to acknowledge the positive impact you've had and these are the things that I've enjoyed. So, it was very nice.

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It was early in the morning, we were in the staff room and I approached Tara [Grade five teacher]. It was very informal and I said I'd really like to talk to you about the Medieval Festival. I thanked her for inviting me, and told her that I thought it went really well and that I commended her for taking that risk, for inviting parents into the classroom to demonstrate what the children are doing. Anyway, Tara said, oh well, it went okay but I can see areas that I can improve upon. So I could already tell that she'd spent some time reflecting on that and I said well that would be the question that I would ask you: if you were going to do this again what would you do differently to improve on what the children had done? So we talked about those things right there and then

and Tara already had some suggestions. She could see that she needed to spend more time preparing the students and perhaps with some of the parts, she needed to take a stronger hand in directing the children as to what they were going to do. She had allowed the students a lot of choice and felt because of that, there were a lot of repetitive kinds of activities demonstrated. Tara wondered if there might be other ways that she could have the students demonstrate their learning. We talked about some of the specific students and their presentations and one of the things she did say was that the rehearsal had gone better. So we talked about that and we talked about some specific things for students. Tara was bringing a lot of the ideas up herself, and then I also suggested a few things for her to think about, so it was very much a collaborative activity. It's not easy for veteran teachers to invite parents in, let alone a teacher who's still very new in her career. I told her that it takes a lot of courage and I really commended her for doing that. And the feedback she heard from the parents was all very positive, comments like, "I appreciate you taking the time to do this, I really enjoyed coming, I was amazed at the amount of information the children learned from this, and so on. So that was a good discussion and she's going to try again in the spring. I reminded her that the teachers she'd worked with last year, at my previous school, were teachers who do a lot of student celebrations of learning. You know, two or three times a year they invited parents in, so Tara had an opportunity last year to see two people who I consider to be masters at this at work and I'm sure this is one of the reasons why she chose to do it. There aren't a lot of teachers who do this.

January/February

***Researcher Note*:** I did not visit Eaton School in January or February due to personal schedules and illness in the principal's immediate family but these narratives are relevant to this time period.

Narratives: One thing that has probably changed my relationship with people somewhat is our staff Christmas party. I think a number of us, myself

included, really let our hair down and so it was an opportunity for people to see me in a different way, and an opportunity for me to see others in a different way. I think that in my job I tend to try to maintain a very professional demeanor most of the time, not 100% of the time, but most of the time. When you have an opportunity to have a party together or a social event together where you can let your hair down a little bit, I think a different side of me comes out and as a result of that, for example, we share jokes, we share those moments and we can joke about them and we can tease each other about things that happened there that we wouldn't have been able to before because they hadn't happened, they hadn't occurred and people didn't know me like that. So I think that part of the change in relationships with people is that they not only have seen a professional side of me but they have also seen a side where I was quite different. I mean I was controlled, not drunk or disorderly or anything like that, but just having a lot of fun. Obviously the thing that brought us together was the fact that we all teach here but there were other things that evening that made us realize we were more alike in other ways as well.

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There was an incident that occurred that was different from what I had been experiencing so far which was probably a bit of a reality check. But anyway, now I'm able to put it in perspective and be much more rational about it. At the time, my first response was quite an emotional one. What happened was we have these social committees that work on a monthly basis doing an activity for the staff, and we have divided ourselves into about four or five people on each committee. So there was a committee for January and to the best of my knowledge there had been nothing planned yet. So I went to one of the committee members and asked if they had any plans for the social committee. She said no, they hadn't even gotten together and this was the second week in January, so I said well, Robbie Burns is coming up and I've been thinking about some things that we might be able to do as a school, low key, not interfering with the curriculum, but as a school just to celebrate or at

least let kids become aware of who Robbie Burns was and how that day is celebrated by Scottish people. And I said, I wondered if you might consider a Robbie Burns' day breakfast for the staff? She said she thought it was a great idea and so went to her other committee members who also thought it was a great idea with the exception of one. Norman's [teacher] resistance to it was the fact that he had difficulty getting to school early in the morning for breakfast himself because of some family commitments. But the committee decided to go ahead with it anyway and gave him the option of finding someone to exchange places with him on the committee. Norman did that, and to the best of my knowledge, that didn't seem to be an issue or a problem. There was another person willing to pick up that position and willing to participate in the Robbie Burns' day breakfast so I thought it was a done deal. So I announced Robbie Burns' day to the staff and gave them some information on what we would be doing and then the social committee gave information about the Robbie Burns' breakfast. Then, because I had suggested this, I also offered my assistance. I said I would be more than happy to help the committee and, in fact, I offered to make the porridge which is a staple of a Robbie Burns' day breakfast. So, that was fine and we held the breakfast and as far as the staff was concerned, the only thing they did, other than the members of the committee, was to come to breakfast and we encouraged everyone to wear plaid. We encouraged the children to wear plaid on that day also. Anyway, as you know, our district is facing quite a huge deficit for next year and the superintendent had requested that principals approach staff to ask about what we should stop doing in our schools in order to focus on teaching and learning? He had asked us to pose that question to our staff and give him their responses at the same time as this Robbie Burns' activity was going on. So I had asked the staff at a previous meeting to do this and had asked them to turn it in to me by sometime that week. I had already received quite a few of these forms back from staff because I had written the question up just on a sheet for them to fill in their ideas, and had received quite a few hand written replies. I think only

one person put a name on it, but the ideas were good, some were directly related to our school more than the district, but there were certainly some district kinds of things that we could consider. Anyway, we held our breakfast, held our Robbie Burns' day, and that morning I went to look in my mailbox and there was another response and it was typed. It basically said two things: that the staff social committee is for the staff and shouldn't be used for celebrating things like Robbie Burns' day and then it said, we need to shorten our staff meetings, get rid of the game playing and storytelling. That was it. That was all that was on it, and I took offense to that. The one that I took the greatest offense to was the Robbie Burns' one. The other one I could understand, as I'm quite aware that not everyone appreciates the little activities that I bring to staff meetings. But I'm going to do them anyway because that's me and people are going to have to accept that, and I will speak to them at the staff meeting, in a positive way. But the other one I took offense to. I thought that was a staff activity, first of all, and the feedback from those people who participated, and the majority of the staff did come to breakfast, was very positive. So I thought this is someone who clearly doesn't have a real understanding of this or sees it in a very insular kind of way, simply from his/her own point of view without considering others. But, I guess it burst my bubble for a moment because things had been going so well and I had been getting such positive feedback, and then to get that, it hurt. So I shared it with the vice-principal. I felt sufficiently sure, confident, that it wouldn't have come from him, that he wouldn't have approached it that way. The basis by which I came to that conclusion is simply because he has not been reticent to share his opinion with me before when it's disagreeable to him, and in a positive way, in a constructive way. So I vented with him. I mean I didn't get carried away or anything but I started to speculate as to who might have given it to me. But in talking it out, I came to the realization, of course the next day I was able to even put it in better perspective, but I came to the realization that there wasn't any point in speculating who had given it to me. Obviously, that was someone's opinion and they were certainly entitled to that

opinion but I shouldn't let it get to me like that. But I think the thing I found unfortunate about it, and still do, is that whoever sent that note was not prepared to come and speak to me personally. They knew that it would be offensive or they knew it would be hurtful but were not prepared to face that and even went to the extent of typing it, rather than handwriting it so that they could be disguised and hide behind anonymity. So I think that they were very aware that this was something that would not be helpful, that was not constructively-given criticism. But anyway, as I say, it burst my bubble a bit and put things into perspective because the year has gone so well and I felt so readily accepted by the staff, and parents, and students and yet clearly there are things that, while some people might like them and tolerate the way I do things, there are some who don't. And while they may not be willing personally to speak up, they are prepared, at times, at least to express their opinions. It's a small thing in the scheme of things but I do want to address it at the staff meeting in a way that I hope will have people realize that when I ask a question that I am aware that there is a certain risk of getting back feedback that I may find personally offensive, but that I am open to that, that I am prepared to take that risk. But even more so, I want to encourage them again to come to me. If there is an issue, I would prefer that we discuss it and that perhaps there's some information there that they don't have and that maybe their opinion would change if they had that information. There certainly have not been any situations that have occurred this year for any of the staff that would lead someone to the conclusion that I am not approachable, or that I am somehow unwilling to hear another person's point of view.

March

Action Fragment: Lenore is scheduled to teach a grade six math class to allow the teacher an opportunity to work with an AC student. She arrives just as the teacher is working through a math problem on the board. Lenore notices that the process is incorrect and she politely asks the teacher if she can attempt to solve the problem. At the same time, Lenore explains to

the students that these problems are challenging for all of us. Lenore proceeds to rework the problem correctly.

Sound Bits: Lenore refers often in conversation to her former school; jokes with a student; encourages input from the main secretary who is very knowledgeable and skilled; expresses a desire to take a more business like approach to managing the school.

Observed Practices: Lenore works to complete a lot of requisite paperwork and emails; briefly confers with the computer consultant who is in the school on Monday and Thursday mornings; delegates any discipline problems to the vice principal who has a more authoritative style, unless there are issues too encumbered by history; reads and signs all the students' report cards; likes to be in the staff room at recess to chat with teachers; writes a letter to a parent who has nominated a teacher for an award; presents flowers to the secretary for her birthday.

Narratives: I like to sign all the report cards, so when we did our first set, I asked the teachers to give me their report cards when they were finished. I read them all, signed them and I added a comment on each one. Where there were errors, I gave them back to the teachers to correct. Anyway, as I was looking at the report cards, I recognized that in our division one report cards, the teachers were only commenting on the four core subjects: math, language arts, social and science. For art, music and phys. ed., there was an achievement mark and there was an effort mark, but there was no comment. One or two teachers made an occasional remark for a child about one of those subjects, or maybe two of those subjects, but it was very inconsistent. So there was lots of inconsistency and that concerned me. I raised my concern with the vice-principal first. I didn't raise it with the teachers right away. I hadn't anticipated any concerns and there was no time to change anything because we were in a deadline position now. So the vice-principal and I talked about it and basically from what he understood, the former principal had made some agreement with the teachers, some compromise, when they had changed over to computer report cards, that they

only had to comment on those subjects. The vice-principal also felt it was unacceptable and certainly was not the way things were being done at the division two level, where the teachers were commenting on every subject. So there was a discrepancy between expectations for the two divisions, and in my opinion a difference in the amount of work that was going into the report cards. Well, we didn't get any complaints from parents. There were no issues there so the parents either didn't realize there was a discrepancy or they didn't mind or whatever, I'm not sure. So the vice-principal and I talked a lot about how to handle it because I wanted to bring it up. I felt it was unacceptable and so after a lot of thought, I brought it up at a meeting that I had only with the division one teachers. I just tried to be very open and very honest but I also tried to be very sensitive to what I anticipated their reaction to be, and I was actually very pleased with the response. They were accepting, for the most part, of what I was saying, but also concerned about the amount of extra time it would take them if they were to go that way. One of the teachers asked if there had been any parent complaints because if there weren't, why were we doing this? And I said well, I believe as professionals that we are proactive and that we anticipate things that we know to be correct. I said that one of my concerns is that when I look at these report cards, by virtue of the fact that we're only commenting on these four core subjects, I think that we make a statement about what we think about the importance of those other subjects, and I think that's erroneous. I said I don't believe that you necessarily believe that but that's what I believe it looks like, and I'm not comfortable with us continuing to do that. I believe that as a result of my relationship with those teachers that they were able to accept what I had to say and then we could get on with talking about how we go about changing this without making it a huge amount of work for us. We were actually able to modify the report card very easily, and get them all onto an easier computer program. So it has turned out to be a very positive move. I also gave each grade group a half-day off to develop comments in those areas that they hadn't been commenting on. We could afford to do that, and

my belief is that for them it's an acknowledgment of the fact that yes, it will take you time to put this together and here is some time for you to do that. Rather than saying now, this is something you have to add onto your workday or do on an early dismissal Thursday. So, they were much more able to accept that extra demand. Certainly my approach to this issue is based on those positive and negative experiences that I have had previously as an administrator.

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When I first started as a principal, I learned a lot on the job by doing and calling up people that I felt I could trust and get a practical answer from. There are some people that you don't feel concerned about asking them dumb questions and there are others that you know you don't want to ask. There were lots of readings, different books out at that time. I don't do a lot of professional reading, I really don't. That's been an area that, at times, I've felt I wanted to increase in terms of my own professional growth, but I guess I haven't found it to be beneficial enough that it's made me want to continue or pursue it to any great extent. I think I like things practical. I don't like things technical at all, so I need to read stories, and I enjoy that but, otherwise, I find it difficult to engage in professional reading to learn how to do things. I think that most principals that I have spoken to would rate collegial support as having had the greatest impact on their professional development. Sitting and talking like this is truly, for me, how I improve, how I reflect on things, how I get more ideas, more so than reading. I like attending conferences and in-services. What I look for is practical ideas. I always feel that if I attend something and come away with something practical that I could then implement or utilize at my school, I feel it's been worthwhile. For example, when I looked through the brochure for the teacher's convention, I was looking for things that I was interested in plus I was looking for more information about new initiatives that we would have to implement and feeling the need to get information about those so that I could then be supportive to the staff and the students during the process. For my own professional

growth, I'm looking for resources to help me improve in certain areas. I've never felt that I have done a good enough job in the financial aspect of a school. I've always done the budget and I certainly know where we're going to spend money in large categories, but on the day-to-day, kind of, keeping track, I've always relied on the secretary to do that. That's all well and good but how do I know that they're keeping track? I've wanted to monitor more this year and I don't think I've been very successful doing that. It's not an interest of mine, so although part of me says I should do that, it's hard to do.

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Since the teacher accepted the combined class, she has been absolutely professional. She has made the best of it and I think is doing an incredible job. Now she's had assistance because we have had the help of the interns and I think that's made a big difference to both herself and to the other teacher who has a combined class but still, even if that had not been there, I would like to believe that neither teacher would behave any differently than they are right now. I guess I'll put that to the test next year when the issue of staffing combined classes comes up again. But one of the things I want to do for sure is make the decision before the end of the year so that whoever is going to be given that position will know the decision when they leave for the summer and they can then plan accordingly. If they choose not to do anything until the fall, then that's their choice, but at least they will know and if there are some summer in-services or preparation work that they can do, then they have that option. It was really short notice for the teacher this year, and for someone to get her head wrapped around it and make that instant change, it's not always easy. I think this teacher adapted really quickly and I give her a lot of credit for that. I've certainly been in some situations where people never let you forget that you kind of gave them the raw end of the deal and that's never been an issue. She has a wonderful classroom and I certainly try to give her lots of positive feedback, as I do others. With some people it's easier to do than with others and I don't know why. I guess with some people it's more obvious what you can say. You can see certain things

more easily with some people than others and there are some people that I feel more comfortable just being with, so maybe I go into their classrooms more and look for those opportunities more than I do with others. There are just some classes that I always feel very comfortable going into, perhaps the different personalities of the people and also the different ages of the kids. I enjoy going to the younger classes a lot. The kids all welcome me. It's not that the older kids don't, but it's not quite the same. I've never felt here that anyone was more welcoming but I think there are some people who are less welcoming. I've certainly been sensitive to the fact that staff definitely want me if I came in with yes can I help you but just to pop in for a visit is certainly not a normal thing to have happen. I would try then to drop into those people more often so they could get over that feeling. But with some people it takes a long time to adjust to a different style, and I think personality plays a part and obviously there are some people that, for whatever reason I feel more affinity than I do with others. I'm more comfortable around them and they're more comfortable around me. I don't feel I've had a big challenge in regard to staff. Overall, the challenge has been to be accepted and establish credibility and that's been my goal but I haven't found it particularly challenging to do that here. I don't feel it's been really difficult to do that but I do think that the challenge is for teachers who are both new and lack experience to feel that they are supported, that they have what they need to be successful in their jobs. So that's been a challenge, but again, it's not a difficulty. They come with a lot of natural ability so it's a matter of helping them to define that, to reflect on what it is that they're doing that helps them to be successful and what are the things that they're doing that get in the way of their being successful. It's been a positive challenge and I think it's been working out extremely well because not only have these people learned a lot from us but I think we've learned a lot from them too. I know I feel very fortunate that I can't identify anyone who I feel is a weak link here. What I think they feel about me, not based on anything that they've necessarily said, although some people give you some very specific feedback, but I believe that they think I am

credible in terms of the fact that I can teach, that the kids respond to me in a positive way, and that I have a good manner with the kids. I think they perceive me as a very positive, enthusiastic, energetic person. I think that they see that I work hard, and that doesn't mean that the job is challenging or difficult, but just that I put time, energy and effort into what I do. I think that they believe that I am reliable, and responsible. If they ask me to do something I think they know it's going to be done and as quickly as I possibly can. I think they feel supported.

April

Researcher's note: The principal took a brief holiday in April so there were no visits to Eaton School but the following stories apply to this time period.

Narratives: What I chose to do at a subsequent staff meeting was to share that feedback I had received about staff meetings going on too long, getting rid of the games, and the readings, with the whole staff. I addressed all of the issues that related directly to the school, and I indicated to them that this is my opportunity to inform, at times to teach, hopefully to motivate, hopefully to inject some enthusiasm in things that we're going to be doing but also to invite your thoughts and opinions and all those things. I said, we all have our own style and this is my style and I like to do things that I perceive are fun and hopefully motivating. I told them that I personally like doing those things and having those things done to me or for me and so obviously then I am going to like doing those things for others. But I said, I certainly can understand that at times it means that the staff meetings are going to be lengthened as a result of these additions, so I said I was willing to compromise here. I said that if you will accept and be tolerant of my style, you don't have to like it, you don't have to participate in those things if you choose not to, and I would never force you to do that, but accept that that's my style, then I will also try when I am developing an agenda for the staff meetings to take into consideration, weigh the issues that may take us more time to slog

through or just more agenda items to get through and I will not plan to add on those activities on staff meetings that are already full and will already take us as long as any of us want to stay here including myself. I was looking around at the staff as I was speaking, and you get a lot of feedback, gestures from people. I was getting smiles, and I was getting nods and after the meeting I had a few people approach me in different ways to say that they really liked those things and they would not want me to eliminate them. I had someone send me a note. It was anonymous, but a note, all typed up, to say how much they appreciated those things and that they have used some of these ideas in other situations that they've been in, used a story I've read or used something, whether it's in a conversation with a friend, or whatever. And I'm still getting positive comments.

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The next week in the staff room, one of the teachers started talking about an activity that I had introduced after Christmas. It was meant as a New Year's resolution kind of activity and it was a dream sheet that came from a story from *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. It was about a gentleman who is now in his seventies, who at age 15 had made a list of all of the things he wanted to accomplish in his lifetime and his list was 130 some items long and he had, in fact, accomplished the vast majority of them, and they were significant accomplishments. In the institute that I was in this past summer, we were charged with doing that task ourselves and I liked it so much that I brought it to the staff and had them do it. As I watched people doing it that day there were some who did nothing and there were some who wrote for quite awhile. But anyway, these two teachers were talking about it and they were talking about dreams that they had and I can't remember what the dream was but one of them said to the other, you know, you need to add that to your dream sheet. She said that dream sheet has made a big difference to her life, and that she'd used it in another context with friends. She said she thought that was a great activity. So, I'm still getting incidental feedback as time goes on.

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I haven't heard anything negative from anyone after that one typed response. No one came and owned up to having written that comment, but a few people came up and said, we just want you to know that wasn't our comment. The vice-principal and I had talked quite a bit about this issue. On the one hand, initially I was a little offended by it but on the other hand, when I was able to get past the emotion and put that in perspective I invited that and I truly want that, and that's the way I started out the conversation at the staff meeting. You know, be careful what you ask because you will receive and I said I asked for this feedback and I got it, and you don't always get the feedback that you want, you don't always hear what you hope to hear. But I said I want you to know that when I ask you for something whatever you give me I am going to listen to you. I might not agree with it but I will listen to it and I will respond in some way to that feedback. So, I think that's an important message to give as well. It was important to say that and who knows what whoever wrote the comments in the first place is thinking now—I don't know. So in January we did the dream sheet, then February we didn't really do anything, and then in March we had a very short meeting because I felt that with report cards people needed time. So the agenda was quite short and I just went through it and then said that's it and we were finished in an hour. While that would have been a good meeting to add something to, I didn't feel it was the right time to do that.

May

Action Fragment: Classroom microphone systems have now been tried by 90% of the teachers. They have agreed to order the new equipment for next year.

Sound Bits: Lenore admits to being much more relaxed now that budget documents are finished; states that this is the month for gearing up towards provincial exams while gearing down with final school concerts and events.

Observed Practices: Lenore works on staffing assignments for next year; meets for one on ones with teachers who are being evaluated this year; visits to classrooms continue; comments to teachers about the displays of children's exceptional art work.

Narratives: I had attended some workshops on change before so the information we were getting about change was not new. But I think that the main benefit was putting it into the context of a school. How do we go through change in a school and if we are going to try to bring about a major change, what information do we need to understand that would help us to bring that about in such a way that people ultimately supported the change and started to do things more proactively themselves to bring about that change more quickly for all concerned? So, the thing I really liked was that it was a simulation of an educational kind of sharing and we can take that back to our schools and put that into the perspective of our school. For me, it was the best PD I've had. Not only do I think it was professionally relevant, but personally, the setting that we were in was very relaxing, there was a really nice balance between working, although we were playing a game, so we didn't feel like it was work, precisely. We were enjoying it and we know that when you're having fun you're also learning so much but you just don't realize that you're learning. So, anyway, it was excellent and it was very enjoyable. During the game, if I wasn't sure about a policy, I would refer to the manual. But I also relied a lot more on my colleagues and mentoring with different people.

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My major focus has been to really feel that I understand the school and how it functions. That means getting to know the students to the extent that I have been able to, the staff and the parents. Really, that's what I feel I've been focusing on this year—just getting to know as much as I can about the school and the various stakeholders in the school so that when we're faced with decisions or when we're drawing up plans, whether or not we're going to develop a mission statement at some point in time, that I can participate in

those processes feeling like I know where we've come from, feeling like I've got a vision about where we're going to. So it's really been getting to feel confident that I have a good working knowledge of the school and therefore, I can help guide it into the next phase, whatever that is, wherever we're going in the future so that I can steer it in that direction and provide that leadership, although I certainly don't see change required. Our budget, for example, for the next three years is really quite a maintenance-type of budget. There's not anything significantly new in it. I don't feel the need for us to do anything new and different. The school functions extremely well, so it's hard to come up with, oh we should be going in this direction because it works well. I mean, why mess with something that isn't broken? It's a relief in terms of feeling that I can concentrate on fine-tuning the things that are here that work well, and it's not a huge challenge in terms of difficulty, stress level or time. It's still a demanding job but it's nowhere near as demanding as my first or last years at my former school had been for sure. The last year was the least challenging, but even it was challenging compared to here. I love being here. I love coming to school. I didn't always love being at my former school, but I still like the role of the principal very much. I enjoy being a principal and I enjoy the job. But I would say that I'm enjoying it a lot more here than I did there. As the principal, I certainly feel that I am the supervisor. I hope that I don't come across as 'the boss' based on the context that I have to tell people what to do in order for the job to be done. I'd like to believe that my role, once I realize that people do the job without me having to be there, that they just have their own integrity and their own level of professionalism, is simply to assist and support them to do that job. In this school, I don't feel like I've had to ever take a role of authority in terms of this is my decision because I'm the principal. I think people here are professionals that do their job and they don't need to have a 'boss' hovering over them to get the job done. I certainly hope that I do not come across as 'bossy'. I hope that I do come across as being the person who is ultimately responsible for the decisions that affect the whole school but I hope that doesn't come across as authoritarian or a power

kind of position. That's not the way I want it to be. Now there have been times in my career that I've taken that stance and I've felt the need to take that stance but I do not feel the need to do it here. For me the whole year was an opportunity to get to know the school and to get to know the school community, the staff, students and parents so that I could feel that decisions that I would make both on an on-going basis but long-term decisions in terms of directions for the school or vision or anything like that, that I would feel really confident that those decisions were based on a real good grounding of knowledge, and sort of where we've come from, where we'd like to be going. So that was certainly my first priority. Getting to know the school and the community and so on has remained a big thrust throughout the year. And I'm still getting to know some things. I mean, I don't feel quite confident in my knowledge. Every once in awhile I'm brought up short because I don't realize something. You don't know about things until you experience them in some instances, like the whole enrollment process. This first year some place is a year of firsts, the first time you do the kindergarten open house, the first time you do the grade six graduation, and all of those things. You don't have the traditions and you don't have a history with participating in those things. So while there are still some firsts to be experienced, and I am still experiencing some firsts, I feel quite confident in my knowledge of the school. So that certainly has been the ongoing priority. Part of getting to know the place is to determine what does it need? Are there some needs that have not been addressed or things like that and I guess more and more, I feel that this is a school that needs to be needed. I mean, the things that I see going on here, for the most part, are all excellent things and we need to maintain those standards and we need to maintain that climate. When we were doing the budget process, there weren't any things that stood out for me as being needs that are different from what they have been before. It's an excellent staff, the school itself functions extremely well, the building has been well taken care of and so, to a certain extent, I feel like I am simply maintaining the status quo. I am making a few modifications along the way and I think putting

my own stamp on things, but it is an exceptional school and I can't take credit for that. I simply can maintain what's been done already. So I don't have a different vision, I don't see a different direction for us to go in and so in terms of the goals and priorities, I really don't have any other than the things that would maintain what's been done already. I do think for the most part that the people on staff here are able to compartmentalize their lives quite a bit. There has been the odd physical ailment, or illness, or surgery or whatever that has affected a person, and they've had time off from the job or whatever they needed to get themselves healthy. If people are experiencing other challenges in their lives they are not affecting their jobs. They may talk about it to their friends or they may share something with me but not to the extent that it's affecting their ability to do their job. Maybe they're not doing it as well as they would otherwise but they're still doing a good job.

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I think that one of the things that our district tries to do when they place principals in a school is to try to match principals with a school, with a neighborhood. I feel very much that I was a good match for this school in terms of the kinds of experiences that I'd had before. The kinds of schools I'd been at are very similar to this school. The communities have been very similar to this and I think the strengths that I have demonstrated before would have been perceived as the strengths that would've been identified as being required in a leader in this school community. So I've walked into a setting where I think there was a good match between the school community and myself. I think our two shapes just fit together really well. So as far as my movement into this school, I think it's worked out extremely well. It's different from when I went into my former school. I think that I was a good match for that school but there were lots of changes that we went through as a school in the years that I was there, and things that I saw that were needed and not always supported by the school community. I tried to move them into a direction that I felt we needed to go and I think I had some of the skills and qualities that were needed to do that but it was very challenging to make

changes there. I really feel that my former school was a very challenging assignment and we went through a couple of years of upheaval. So when I walked in here, I didn't know what to expect. I certainly heard some things about this school. It had a good reputation in the community and the principal was highly regarded. In some ways, I feel like I have been given a gift. I mean, I am not forced to put in really long hours and I do not feel the stress of this job as I felt with both of my other principalships. So I feel like I have been given a gift. Whether or not it was deliberate or not on anyone's part I don't know, but I certainly feel very fortunate to be here. I sometimes feel guilty when I listen to my colleagues and I empathize with the kind of demands that go along with some schools, but I am fortunate to be here. I've worked very hard and I came close at times, like anyone else to being burnt out, to questioning do I want to continue doing this job? Is it worth it? So to have a time when I can sit back and enjoy what I am doing, when I can spend time supporting teachers the way I think I have this year, and spend time with kids, I mean, to me that's what we all should be able to do but I know that's not the reality in any number of schools. So I'm going to enjoy every moment that I'm here and who knows what the future will bring. I certainly understand that things can fall apart if a person doesn't address what needs to be addressed and I certainly think that the staff look to me for support. They also look to me to confirm that the direction they were going in was still a good direction and that there weren't going to be a lot of changes because someone new came in and had new ideas. So I think that they have felt that their work and their efforts have been confirmed because we haven't had to make a lot of changes. I've thanked the former principal numerous times and my hope is that I can build on what she had established here and meet the changes of curriculum, so that we don't stagnate and we don't become complacent with what we've done but that we can take what is in place and fine tune those things to improve it a little bit. I think as a seasoned principal coming into a school like this, you're not as concerned about your own status within the district, building your own skills and knowledge. I mean you've got that.

You've got knowledge of the district and experience with the various processes the district goes through. I have confidence in my own abilities and I have confidence that people perceive that I do a good job. I wouldn't have thought of taking time off before. Now, I feel confident to do that. One, because I know that the school runs really well and the other is that I feel I deserve this. I mean, I'm losing a lot of money to take the time off anyways so I don't think they would say no, but I would never have even thought of asking before. I would have worried that they might have perceived that as here's someone who's not very dedicated to the job. I don't worry about that anymore. I feel I am committed and dedicated but I also feel more confident now that one can be just as dedicated and still lead a balanced life and spend time with one's family and still be perceived as being professional. Part of this decision to take some time off is in knowing that staff are all well and content and that there are no staffing issues whatsoever. I feel very confident leaving the vice-principal in charge of the school. If I didn't have the confidence in my assistant principal, I probably would not leave for four days.

June

Action Fragment: A lunchtime craft program, and one in science have been operating at the school on a user pay basis. Parents have lobbied for these programs as a way to keep their children stimulated over the lunch hour. The dilemma Lenore now faces is that due to her lack of knowledge, these businesses have not been charged a school facility use fee. If fees are now levied, as they should be, there is a fear that these businesses may not return, and this is an upsetting prospect for many parents.

Sound Bits: One teacher taking classes towards her M Ed states that she would like to do her mentorship with Lenore because she thinks she is an excellent administrator; teachers convey happiness with their social studies achievement test results; Lenore notifies the family of a new student about the option to have school supplies purchased for a fee by a designated company.

Observed Practices: Lenore accepts a request from a colleague to facilitate a group of principals from across the province at a leadership institute this summer.

Narratives: Actually the year has gone extremely well. I still sometimes have to pinch myself to believe that a whole year has gone by with very few problems or challenges. I mean there have been some minor kinds of things that we've had to deal with throughout the year but nothing, nothing to the same degree that I've dealt with previously. So it's been a fabulous year and I can't believe it's over. It's just gone by so quickly. So, I feel very positive about the year. I'm getting good feedback as I meet with people to finish up. I've got a group of staff I'm meeting with for the one-to-ones because they're a part of the review process this year. So, as I meet with them I'm getting a little bit of feedback from them if they wish to give any to me and I think it's been a year that we've all enjoyed and appreciated. Certainly it's my perception that people are feeling content, feeling that they've been given a high degree of support from me and that we've sort of developed a good working relationship. I think there's probably a little bit of apprehension about next year, knowing that there will be less money, and therefore fewer resources, that we won't find resources available or the availability to buy what one might want or need. But again, in a school like this, it's a new facility that's very well equipped, so one has to put that in perspective a little bit because we have a lot. It's just that the teachers here are used to having a lot and being able to get more when they need it.

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We have a policy in this school that we've written out and sent home to parents with regard to giving us information to help us make placement decisions about which classrooms to put children in for next year. So we've got a sheet of paper that we sent home as part of our newsletter inviting parents to provide us with any information that they would like to give that would help us to make decisions regarding where we're going to place children. However, we have indicated in this same piece of information that

we're not inviting parents to select teachers for their children. We do invite them to indicate if there are children that they would like their children to be with and that unless we feel that there's some reason why these children shouldn't be together, we would do our best to honor those kinds of requests. So having said that, I've had a number of visits from parents this year wanting to talk about next year and which classrooms their children are going to be placed in and they're for the most part, with very few exceptions, very careful not to come out and say, I would like my child in this teacher's classroom. But they do everything else but, like I want my child in a classroom with a teacher who has brown hair, brown eyes and wears braces. Or they'll do things like, well, my son or daughter needs to be in a classroom where the teacher's very well organized and is very traditional and I smile to myself sometimes when I hear these things because I know that they really want to ask if we'll put their child in a particular classroom. They don't want to be seen as doing that. Sometimes they'll say well, I really don't want my child to be in this person's class and there'll be two people, so by virtue of elimination . . . I wonder to myself if I'm giving more time and credence to their requests than my predecessor or than the vice-principal would and the vice-principal and I have had some conversations about that. At my former school, in elementary, there was no choice. There was only one class at each grade level so if your child stayed at our school, they went into this teacher's class if that teacher was teaching that grade. At junior high, if a parent came and said they would prefer this person or not prefer this person, we would try and honor that. We certainly never invited them to do that. But if people took the time to do that we would try to honor it, if we could. In some cases there were reasons why we couldn't, that person wasn't teaching that particular section of that subject or whatever. Or if your child does that, then they can't be in this class. So it's been interesting for me to go through this and I've really tried to maintain what we said we were not going to do. This is a policy that's been in place in this school for a number of years. And I don't have a problem with it. It makes sense to me that we wouldn't invite people to select teachers for a number of

reasons. But at the same time, I guess I sometimes wonder if we did entertain those requests, would it not balance itself out anyway? I don't know. I had a parent come in the other day and she actually made a definite request for a teacher. And I said to her, I'm sorry I can't honor that. I said, that is not our policy and we've made that quite clear. I said on what basis are you making that request? And basically her rationale was that she knew this teacher and she didn't even know who the other teachers were. And I said, well I can understand why you might be inclined to want your child to go with a teacher that you know. On the other hand, there are two other wonderful teachers here.

* * *

We are told that this is base decision-making, so we should be able to make the decisions for our school. A few months ago, we were invited to submit names of staff members who would be willing to attend a three-day summer in-service on professional growth plans. Their role would be to go back to their school in a leadership role and present this information to their colleagues. When I put that out to my staff, as did many of my colleagues, I had no takers. Nobody was interested in doing that. It was three days in the summer, in August and no one was interested in it. So the vice-principal and I were talking about it and I said to him, well, would you be interested? At first he wasn't, and I said to him, maybe we need to offer some incentive for someone if it's that important that someone in our school gets this information and brings it back to us. So I said, what if we give someone time and money to attend this session in the summer. And he said, well, if you're giving time and money, then I would be interested in doing it. And I said, okay let's do it then. So I registered him. You know, as far as we're concerned, time and money is something that we decide at the school level. Anyway, a month ago, we got a message from the superintendent saying that we may not give time and money for staff to attend this summer workshop. We received that message at a principals' meeting and we were all incensed. If we're making decisions for our schools, why is someone telling us we can't do this? The

rationale was that we couldn't have foxes and rabbits at the same thing. Like, some people receiving time in lieu for it while others are not getting anything, just doing it out of the goodness of their heart. And my response was, we do that all the time. Every time our staff goes to a PD activity they're going potentially on a different basis than someone from another school. I may have given my staff each a thousand dollars for PD. Someone else may have given them a hundred. You know, it's never the same and who cares. If you're in that school and that's what your school is doing, I mean, you can choose either to stay there or not. You can go somewhere else if you don't like certain things that are done at your school. You can try anyway. I mean it's not quite as easy as that. But getting back to the whole idea of control, we were getting creative with this to try and get people to come out to attend because no one was interested and we were told that we couldn't. So, here was, okay, we'll give you this control, but oh, they're getting too creative out there. This is getting scary. Let's pull the reins back in. And that's what happens. I mean, it happens here to a certain extent too, but I think what we need to think about before hand is, and what I try to do, and I think I'm relatively successful at doing, is this a decision that I feel I can let my staff have input into and what's the risk if I do? I certainly never want to give them input into a decision that I've already made. I don't want it to be tokenism. I don't want to go out and say to them okay, well I want to hear your thoughts on this and for them to feel well, she's made her decision anyway, why are we wasting time. You know, it has to be real. It has to be something that I'm truly willing to allow them to decide. And if I'm not going to allow them, if I've already decided myself, then I will communicate that to them and accept whatever consequences go along with that. So, control is an interesting thing and it's a fluctuating thing. In this school right now, I don't feel that, for the most part, I need to take control. I think the teachers have already done that and so I feel confident in giving them those opportunities to be part of decision making.

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Most of my understanding about this position has been from my own experience but also very much from listening to my colleagues and listening to their stories. The assistant principal at my previous school had never gone through the leadership training and we had talked about her being a principal at some point. She was not ready for that yet, given her personal circumstances, her children are young, but she thought that someday she might like to do that. But I told her that I do not feel that she needs the principal leadership training in order to be a principal. I feel that the experiences that she has had have been sufficient to prepare her. I mean certainly the training won't hurt her, and it may help her, but I do not believe that it would make any difference to her success. I think, at times, if you're not sure about a direction, a decision, you can talk to your colleagues, you can talk to, perhaps, in my case, an assistant principal who has those other experiences. For me, I just really believe strongly in on-the-job training.

* * *

I'm looking forward to coming back for the second year feeling more confident in my knowledge of the school, and the staff, and how things function, the expectations, feeling that it's been a very successful year. I feel that I've established my credibility with the staff and with parents and that they're probably going to be a little more relaxed too, because they will know me and I think perhaps their approach may be different. That may be good or not, depending on what their perception is I guess. I'm going to be teaching a little bit next year and I'm looking forward to that. I have gone out on a limb, although I think it's a fairly sturdy limb. I have registered our school for the Terry Fox run next year, something that I have enjoyed supporting personally in the past and I organized the event at my former school for several years. So, I'm looking forward to organizing that at this school. I registered us because there are some advantages to registering a little bit early and I'm going to beg forgiveness after. Actually, what I'm doing is going around to various staff members who I believe would be supportive and soliciting their help because I see them as supportive and also somewhat key. Then I think

that I can get everyone on board. It's a small amount of time that anyone would have to give up and there are tons of benefits. I think anyone would be hard pressed to argue against it. Staff meetings are a good indicator of who the informal school leaders are, who sits together, who speaks up, what happens if a person speaks up in support of, or non-support of something. How does that influence the group? Those are really good indicators and also observations, conversations, just watching and listening.

I like the fact that teachers here have high expectations for themselves and, therefore, a high level of accountability. No one else has to keep them accountable. They keep themselves accountable and as a result, they're well regarded by the community. I've loved being in a new school. It's wonderful to be in this beautiful facility, to be where resources are and there's a wealth of resources for us to use. I've just had the time and the energy to enjoy school and to get to know kids and to do the kinds of things that I think leaders should be doing rather than spending all my time putting out fires or dealing with those tough issues. The things that I prefer to do are things like curriculum leadership, and leadership in the school, and getting in and seeing what's happening in classrooms, and getting to know kids, and playing with kids. I've been able to do that so it's been a very positive, pleasant year in that regard.

V. Production Notes

The experience of principal succession is neither clear nor easily understood, since this phenomenon cannot be neatly separated out from the experience of "being" a school leader. The process of moving principals from one school to another introduces yet another level of complexity. For discussion purposes, I have identified three major components of filmmaking that I believe are relevant to the moving picture of succession: the script, the sound and the focus. While isolating these elements belies the complexity and interrelatedness of filmmaking and of the succession experience, these close-up shots have helped me to organize the data and to reflect on the stories in ways that reveal deeper understandings of the succession phenomenon. I have moved these two separate pictures of succession closer together in this section for ease of discussion and discovery. I have also woven both principals' direct quotes into the writing in order to maintain the continuous flow of these moving pictures.

Writing The Script

Prior to the start of filming a new movie, there is usually a written script. Working with this script, filmmakers prepare possible thematic interpretations and plan an assortment of movements. But filmmakers know that if they were to work strictly from these prepared plans, they would miss everything that comes to life at the moment of the rehearsal. Therefore, this script operates as a draft idea, the foundation on which to build the actual screenplay. Czarniawska-Joerges (1997) states: "the idea of a screenplay that is ready before the shooting starts is completely false." In fact, she contends, "the screenplay is ready when the movie is" (p. 123). Allowing for the diverse views of participants, creative script writing often takes place in tandem with the acting, as new ideas are attempted and scenarios are accepted, changed, or eliminated. This process allows for subtle and

sensitive relationships to be formed between actors as they create a new world together. Good filmmakers are just as likely to discard, as they are to revise their previous plans and write new ones along the way. Czarniawska-Joerges maintains that "while written texts are very important to action and its meaning, it is equally important to preserve action's other aspects: the movement, the temporality, the improvisation" (p. 30).

Transferring this idea of scripts to education, I was intrigued by Starratt's (1990), and later, Sergiovanni's (1999), declaration that principals are actors who play two parts—one part as educational leader and the other as manager, with different scripts attached to each part. Sergiovanni, Burlingame and Coombs (1999) claim that

> when following the managerial script, the professional administrator is concerned with instrumental and process matters articulated in accordance with the values of bureaucracy....When following the educational leader's script, by contrast, the professional administrator is concerned with matters of purpose and substance, and with struggling to identify the right thing to do. The administrator strives to bring to the forefront the kind of rationality that is based on what makes sense educationally and what is morally right....Though some overlap exists, for the most part, the two scripts are antithetical. As with the actor, sometimes the professional administrator is able to bring the scripts into harmony. At other times, they tug at each other and often one becomes dominant. (pp. 73, 74)

What struck me as significant about the experiences of the principals in this study was the noticeable existence of more than two scripts. My observations of their experiences revealed numerous interlocking scripts that wove back and forth in time, containing stories that had already been written, current stories that were socially created, and collectively written, as well as stories that projected into the future. Our assumptions about schools in general, the residue of many years of acceptance and belief that this is the way it is, were scripts that insinuated themselves into every story.

The Improvisational Script

It was apparent to me that as experienced educators, Collyn and Lenore understood schools as dynamic environments where changes and interruptions were constant, and where human dramas regularly unfolded. They recognized that people in school organizations did not always follow constant and regular patterns of behaviour. As Ryan (1999) explains:

> each and every one of us possess unique natures, and as such, there can be no assurance that we will believe in, or do the same kinds of things that our friends and colleagues do. Nor can there be any guarantee that we will do the same things from day to day, or respond in similar situations in consistent ways. To a large extent, we make our own realities and live them in our particular, peculiar and haphazard ways. (p. 7)

Collyn and Lenore realized that along with some expected and familiar elements of schooling, they would also be faced with unpredictable variations, unexpected patterns that emerged from interactions, multiple routes to take, and uncertainty about the consequences of their actions. Both were aware that as new principals, they were virtual strangers who were entering into improvisational scripts that would be played out on a daily basis. Bateson (1994) likens this type of occurrence to joining in a dance where the steps are learned along the way. As Collyn noted, "there are always issues that you're going to have to deal with and you never know when they're going to turn up. You turn around and there is another one." Bateson cautions, though, that "when strangers meet and find ways of fitting together, the outcome may depend on the assumptions they bring to all interactions" (p. 179). Therefore, she emphasizes the necessity for people to attend and respond, because "even in uncertainty, we are responsible for our steps" (p. 10). Collyn and Lenore were enthusiastic and optimistic about their new positions, eagerly anticipating the "adrenaline of performance" (Bateson, 1994, p. 9). They readily accepted the fragility of the improvisational script and the risks inherent in the process.

The Written Script

For Collyn and Lenore, though, the excitement of improvisation was somewhat tempered by the necessity to adhere to the pre-written scripts of the larger bureaucracy within which they were situated. Gronn (1985) identifies the principal's position as "middleman between upper echelon management and this little arena" (p. 264). Gronn (1984) believes that principals benefit from this position —that when they speak and act, they do so in a certain capacity,

> not simply as an authority or expert on a matter in hand but in authority. He is authorized or empowered, as head of the school, to act in a particular way. This responsibility, bestowed by the office, obligates him to act for and on behalf of others. (p. 81)

As administrators in the same district, similar pre-written scripts were realized for Collyn and Lenore in places like the formal curriculum, district mandates, policies and goals, designated channels of communication, teacher and support staff contracts, and prescribed periods of time (mandatory school openings and closings, time periods allotted for each school day, as well as for each subject taught, compulsory meetings, reports, budgets, and societal holidays). Both principals knew that as these scripts were continuously re-written, the demands and constraints for them would change as well. Collyn referred to these changes as "the flavor of the month and what they're asking you to dance to downtown too. You have to put it in perspective and it's a difficult issue to grapple with. A couple of years ago it was early reading intervention and how were you going to address this in your school, and it's still an issue. It still requires creative ideas. It would be wonderful if someone who had heard all the ideas could compile them for you to choose appropriate initiatives rather than, oh gee out of the blue comes this idea. Oh, let's try that. All of a sudden everyone has to have a plan for this and that just doesn't happen overnight." In relation to these anticipated changes, Sergiovanni (1999) is convinced that "one of the hallmarks of a successful school administrator is the ability to expand the area of choice by deft handling of demands and constraints" (p. 1).

A major constraint for Collyn was the "have-not-ness" of resources at Kildonan School. Also, she realized that the philosophy of the parents and the community was totally at odds with the district's emphasis on assessment. "Downtown wants student achievement and student growth and when you're in a situation like mine, you see that self-esteem is really important too and somehow you can't overdo one." Collyn believed that the school was "so far behind" because the district "has pulled out of looking at individual places, and is not recognizing that not everyone has the same resources available to them and that is going to make a huge impact on how skilled people will be. There would be no point in bringing somebody in here to teach us how to do something when we wouldn't have the machines to do it." The reality of the resource deficiencies at Kildonan School and the apparent mismatch of school district and community goals created challenges for Collyn that circled relentlessly in her mind. She declared: "I guess I have to follow the rules that the board office has for me and I also have to be perceived as someone who is doing something at the school level to make things better."

At Eaton School, Lenore felt constrained in her ability to employ creative resourcefulness in the decision making process, despite a strong record of high academic achievement, and a surplus budget. "We received a message from the superintendent saying that we may not give time and money for staff to attend this summer workshop and we were all incensed. So, here was, "Okay, we'll give you this control, but oh, they're getting too creative out there. This is getting scary. Let's pull the reins back in." As well, Lenore found that school district agendas had a way of invading the school at particularly sensitive times. "Our district is facing quite a huge deficit for next year and the superintendent had requested that principals approach staff to ask about what we should stop doing in our schools in order to focus on teaching and learning. He had asked us to pose that question to our staff and give him their responses at the same time as this Robbie Burns' activity was going on."

Along with the above examples of district scripts, there were other scripts that required Collyn and Lenore to do individual "readings" of their particular school situations. These included school and personal scripts in the present, from the past and for the future.

Present Scripts

I observed both administrators enter their respective schools intent on learning as much as possible about what King and Blumer (2000) refer to as the "descriptive culture" of the school—"its values, behavioral norms, and cast of characters" (p. 357).

Collyn discovered that Kildonan School prided itself on being a safe and caring school with a positive educational climate, where the students' needs were the driving force behind every decision. A review of school documents revealed the existence of a deficit budget and technical resource shortages.

Collyn found the staff to be "very loving and very accepting of the kids." But as she came to know them better, she was disturbed by what she felt were lower achievement expectations for students whom she believed could be achieving more. Collyn identified teachers who were working hard but appeared to be spinning in the same tracks, teachers who were working under their potential, support staff who required additional skills training, and parents who seemed not to care about academic standards but who were very supportive of the teachers. Collyn remarked that "the parents here are more concerned with the socialization aspects," and when she presented the last year's low achievement test results to the parent council, their response was: "Oh well, let's get on with life."

The challenges for individual families in the community also became apparent as the year progressed. Collyn talked of one mother who "pretends everything is just so rosy and wonderful but just a poor, poor job, poor, poor skills, too many kids...there are so many ragamuffins like Bonnie and her sister who are unkempt and dirty. We've had two kids in kindergarten whose

little brothers, within two weeks of birth, had to have major operations and in both cases there's no dad. A kindergarten girl's older brother just died, sixteen, probably suicide, but you don't hear that part. We just see the anguish. Those kinds of things happen in this school. So, you have to keep an ear open for what's happening for them in their lives."

Collyn sensed a need at Kildonan school for staff members to regroup and collectively rediscover their vision. She acknowledged the challenges inherent in this undertaking, especially in relation to teaching assignments. "It's a really tricky situation because I'm walking into a situation that was created obviously and has been perpetuated for a number of years."

It didn't take Lenore long at Eaton School to discover that the main focus was on achievement. "Certainly the culture here is one where academic achievement is highly valued." This was also a school with high academic test results, a resource rich learning environment and a surplus budget.

After meeting individually with each of the staff members, Lenore recognized that "these people have high expectations for themselves and hold themselves very accountable and achievement is very important to them." Lenore believed that these teachers had come to Eaton School "because this school matches their own beliefs and I think that by being here, their beliefs are reinforced by what parents also want and what the school has achieved." She confirmed that the majority of parents in this community were well-educated professionals with high expectations for their children, and that parents and teachers worked very effectively together at Eaton School to promote student achievement. "It's certainly a culture where there's a great deal of parental involvement expected and accepted."

Lenore perceived a need at Eaton School for more celebrations and recognitions. This was one area where she felt that the school could do more. "But the resistance here is that we must remain focused on achievement. We must keep distractions to a minimum in terms of impact on classroom teaching." Lenore attributed this attitude to "the expectations of the community and the history of the school. It comes from the emphasis that we

as a district, we as a province, put on achievement test results. It comes from the teachers' expectations themselves. Even amongst themselves they're somewhat competitive in terms of how well their students do on these tests."

As these scripts came to light at each of the schools, I questioned what influence past scripts have had on the present ones. How, also, have the personal past scripts of each of the principals influenced their responses to these present school scripts?

Past School Scripts

Deal and Peterson (1999) believe that "in large measure, the past is prologue" (p. 47). "The events that make up our lives," Rubin (1986) says, "have nested structure." He compares these events to grains of sand that "are nested in sand castles which are nested in dunes which are nested in a beach." Rubin believes that "small movements are nested in actions which are nested in whole periods of our lives" (p. 10). The nested history and context of Kildonan and Eaton Schools affected to a large extent what Collyn and Lenore believed they should or could do to be effective.

The camera had already been rolling for many years prior to Collyn's arrival at Kildonan School. The years had taken their toll physically on the school building as evidenced by the peeled paint, worn carpets, ageing furniture and old equipment. The strong culture of caring that had evolved over the years had its origins at a time when the school's population had been three times larger than present numbers and a majority of students came from immigrant families. Collyn commented: "this is a very dynamic community, there's no denying it. The demands of the school have changed and what's being taught in this school has changed." Currently, the community consisted mostly of the working poor, the unemployed and single parent families, along with a number of new immigrant families. Collyn stated that "different parts of this area are totally different and yet it's kind of lumped as that big spot where lots of people from the Orient live. We have more white people, and yet you hear things that stereotype areas and schools and they

might be totally wrong." Over the years, the school has gathered a multitude of "mission statements and vision statements and paragraphs and reams of what we should be doing here at this school." Collyn recognized that most of the staff members at Kildonan School had been there for a long time and she believed that to some extent, their practices had been shaped by the context of the school and the community.

Collyn proclaimed that the former principal at Kildonan School "did such wonderful work for this staff, just wonderful work and there are so many things that are to be commended." She was forced, though, to accept some of the consequences of her predecessor's actions. One mother, she claimed "is very angry because she feels that the school charged her and accused her daughter of something when it wasn't true.... But the report was written in February of last year and I'm getting the fallout on December 2nd of this year." Although Collyn saw many similarities between herself and her predecessor, she also understood that comparisons were an inevitable consequence of succession. "I don't think the previous principal and I are that different, so I don't think there are many comparisons. But I think it's only normal to expect those kinds of comparisons to be made every so often. I just don't respond to them." Collyn was, however, acutely aware of some philosophical differences. For example, she immediately changed the discipline practices, believing that the "lock-step policies are probably a nice thing to have as a guideline but as a principal I can't adhere to those guidelines and not consider the context of things." Collyn believed in walking her own path. "I don't think that the principal should change to accommodate the parents because they're used to somebody sitting behind a mound of paperwork and I don't think that a person should sit behind a mound of paperwork because that's the way the guy before them did it. I think you have to be yourself. I couldn't imagine trying to be like someone else."

The moving picture at Eaton School began much more recently than at Kildonan School. Eaton was a relatively new school with a unique, award winning design, and a carefully selected staff, many of whom were hired

when the school first opened. The interior décor was bright and colourful—its newness accentuated by freshly painted walls, contemporary furnishings, and state of the art technology. The majority of residents in this up-scale community were well-educated professionals in a variety of occupations who supported a strong culture of achievement at Eaton School.

Lenore considered her predecessor at Eaton School a hard act to follow. She credited the former principal and staff for the present smooth functioning of the school. "It's an excellent staff, the school itself functions extremely well, the building has been well taken care of.... it is an exceptional school and I can't take credit for that. I simply can maintain what's been done already." Lenore was circumspect about the information and advice she had received from her predecessor. She believed that "we all potentially behave differently in different situations with different people," and she preferred not "to read or know something about someone that would impact how I approach them without giving them a chance to be different, to change. I certainly listened to what the former principal had to say but at the same time I very much wanted to get my own perceptions." Clearly, Lenore chose to find her own way. When issues arose that involved past actions or comments about the former principal, Lenore tried to "just really put it into perspective." Her approach was "let's not worry about history because we can't change history. Let's just focus on the here and now because we're different and I can't begin to understand how she dealt with things or why she dealt with certain things in a certain way. Who knows, perhaps I would've done the same thing under those circumstances." Ironically, Lenore found it more of a challenge to respond to favourable comparisons. "It's something that I'm not quite sure sometimes how to react to, because there is the part about being flattered, that someone likes your style, or whatever, but at the same time I don't want that to be at the detriment of someone else. I don't go seeking that, and I don't need that."

Past Personal Scripts

Greenfield contends that we carry past scripts in our minds and "use them as templates to stamp meaning into the world around us" (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993, p. 63). Similarly, Ben-Peretz (1995) views past scripts as guidelines for understanding life events. He believes that "they provide a framework for remembering events and acting upon these memories" (p. 11). Scenarios of their own past experiences provided reels of moving scripts for Collyn and Lenore to view on their inner personal screens. Both principals admitted to using these past scripts as a rich reserve from which to draw on pertinent information to help them quickly make sense of present challenges, to search through for possible options and to view future possibilities. As Bateson (1994) acknowledges: "if I recognize my situation today as comparable to but not the same as my situation yesterday, I can translate yesterday's skills and benefit from yesterday's learning" (p. 86).

Collyn admitted that Kildonan School was totally different from any school community she'd ever worked in before. "I came from a school in a much higher socio-economic area.... I had a culture shock when I moved here. There's no doubt. And I'm still sometimes shocked at what kids say and do and how they behave and how they think it's okay because that's what they see." Even with the culture shock, Collyn still felt like she fitted in well at this school because of her knowledge base, her skills and flexibility, her belief in people and her past experiences. Collyn embraced the complexity of the situation at Kildonan School and she was fully prepared to blend, adapt and adjust her practices to the current reality. She admitted: "I can't just do things the way I used to do them, because this is a different staff and this is a different community. I can't respond the same way to two very similar things because your people are different, your teachers will be different, your parents are different, your kids are different as far as their learning."

Collyn considered her extensive experience as a classroom teacher and a district consultant in languages and effective teaching strategies particularly valuable. "My experience as an effective teaching consultant has

been very helpful. It definitely helps me because I know what I'm talking about and I can actually put my hand on handouts or I can demonstrate how to do something or I can point it out in the classroom, 'Well, you did this and you did that really well.' It certainly does make a big difference. I think it makes a difference in your credibility." Collyn also valued her personal family experience. "Being a mom teaches you patience. It really does." However, while Collyn believes that knowledge and experience are useful, she insisted: "the questions must come first.... I just say things like in the past this is how I'm used to things happening, how different is it here?"

Kildonan School was Collyn's second position as a principal. She admitted to not feeling as much pressure at this school as she's had in the past. The main focus at her previous school had been the implementation of a strong computer program. Her main challenge had been the relationship between herself and the former principal. Collyn had succeeded a principal who had been relieved of his leadership responsibilities, yet had remained at the school as a classroom teacher. But Collyn tried to downplay her experiences at her former school as much as possible. She claimed that she was really careful "not to compare the staff at this school to the other school. I never mention my other school. You almost have to force those two words out of my mouth because it's comparing. It would be the equivalent of comparing me to the former principal. It would be saying, 'It was better there than here, what's wrong with you guys?'" Collyn recognized that her position on this issue stemmed from her experience with a former teacher. "I had a teacher who just did nothing but mention the school her daughter was attending and everybody got so sick of it. As soon as she said that word we were gone and out of there." However, Collyn was also realistic. "I don't think we live in isolation. In fact, I talk about other experiences I've had too and other problems we've had in other schools, and I certainly hope to hear what happened in other schools. Not to the point where I'm sick of hearing it, but to a point where that information is valuable, like that's a good idea. You have to

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look at life realistically. It's like pretending you didn't have a life before you met your husband."

Like Collyn, Lenore believed that Eaton School was a good match for her. "The kinds of schools I'd been at are very similar to this school. The communities have been very similar to this and I think the strengths that I have demonstrated before would have been perceived as the strengths that would've been identified as being required in a leader in this school community." Aside from the community similarities, though, Lenore discovered some major differences. "The greatest difference this year is that there were obvious challenges at my former school, obvious areas, problems, that needed to be addressed. And issues that were obvious to me. I had parents on my doorstep immediately. It was very obvious to me right from the start that I was put there to solve some problems. Here, there were no obvious issues, concerns, or problems. So, it was a maintenance situation and the challenges here are different. When we're doing very well with the status quo why would one change anything?"

The administrative staff at Eaton School included a vice-principal, who according to Lenore, had become much more involved in school leadership this year. From what he had indicated to Lenore, "there were a lot of times in the past, depending on what the issue was or whatever was going on, that the principal would simply make the decision and communicate that to him as well as to the rest of the staff." Learning from her past experiences, Lenore wished to involve the vice-principal and the staff in decision making as much as possible. "I think that one of the things I find exciting about being in the education field is that there's never a dull moment, that things are constantly changing and as a result, we are having to constantly kind of reinvent the job." Coming to Eaton School from a very challenging assignment and years of upheaval at her former school, Lenore admitted that she "didn't know what to expect. I certainly heard some things about this school. It had a good reputation in the community and the principal was highly regarded. In some ways, I feel like I have been given a gift."

Although Lenore began her career as a classroom teacher, she has had extensive administrative experience and a number of principalship positions. Lenore acknowledged the advantage of this previous experience, claiming: "this year, as a first year principal in this school, compared to my first year as a new principal are night and day." Lenore believed that using examples from her past experience enhanced her credibility. "Certainly for myself, regardless of how people take that information and use it or choose to ignore it, I certainly believe that it strengthens my commitment and my beliefs to have had those experiences. Certainly, if I had had a particular experience one way or the other it will shape my beliefs and my future actions so certainly for me it shapes the direction that I will go in the future. As I say, what impact it has on individual people, I don't know. But, my own belief would be that if someone is bringing up examples and those examples are based on past experience, it strengthens what it is they are saying." However, Lenore also demonstrated a thoughtful approach to using relevant examples from her past experience. "I mean even if something very similar happened here as happened at my former school, I would consider similar alternatives but I might not choose to use them in this setting for various reasons. You can give strategies, you can give ideas, you can give suggestions, but there is no recipe as far as I'm concerned."

Both principals' reputations as administrators within the district preceded their arrivals at their new schools. For Gronn (1984), an administrator's reputation is part of the institutional identity and the baggage one carries. He compares an administrator's reputation to a shadow, and claims, "just as the shadow can be made to dance, a reputation is a resource to be exploited" (p. 81). Both Collyn and Lenore viewed their own reputations as helping them in a positive way during their transitions. And although the reputations of their predecessors to some extent haunted the hallways and affected their practices, they valued the foundations that had been set earlier. Still, Collyn and Lenore were determined to find their own way forward,

convinced like Greenleaf (1977) that "too much concern with how others did it may be inhibitive" (p. 34).

Kerby (1991) cautions that recalling the past is always an interpretation, "a selective and imaginative re-telling of it from the perspective of the present" (p. 12). I believe that Collyn and Lenore were both very aware of the ability of these interpretations of past school scripts and past personal scripts to influence their present ones.

Future Scripts

In addition to enacting coexisting and intersecting past and present scripts, Collyn and Lenore practiced "anticipatory thinking" (Ramsay, 1999, p. 124). They determined what they wanted to happen in the future and then decided what practices to implement in the present to bring that about. Collyn and Lenore were serious about improving student learning, and I witnessed them both practice high visibility, model effective teaching strategies, and implement professional development as methods to achieve this goal.

Both Collyn and Lenore wished to remain in close touch with classroom realities and teachers' everyday concerns. They regularly walked the hallways and visited classrooms, intent on demonstrating their interest in teaching and learning, and establishing connections with and support for staff members, students and their families. Both principals engaged in informal observations of curriculum and teaching practices, and expressed a desire to contribute to professional collegiality. According to Blase and Kirby (1992), "effective principals are visible, both in the hallways and in classrooms" (p. 107). Blase and Kirby determined that visibility in the hallways was viewed as an effective way to communicate support to both teachers and students, while visibility in the classroom was associated with expectations for instruction. They discovered that "although anxiety levels are heightened somewhat by the principal's visit, teachers work harder, are more innovative, and feel better about their own performance as a result" (p. 108). Modeling was found by Blase and Blase (1998) to be "an impressive example of instructional

leadership, one that yielded very positive effects on teacher reflection and reflectively informed behaviour" (p. 40).

Collyn was intent on "role-modeling and being serious about education in every form and every which way I can." In addition to frequent informal classroom visitations, she participated in the recess supervision schedule as well as regularly positioning herself at one of the entrance doors during school openings and closings and at recesses. "I'm really trying to be positive and I'm trying to be visible. I'm trying to be out there as much as I can." Collyn enjoyed these social times, and regarded them as opportunities for her to become better acquainted with the school community. With persistent optimism, warmth and collegiality, Collyn exhibited an openness and interest that helped the community to get to know her better as well. A common refrain from Collyn, as she happily escaped the confines of her office, was "Let's get out of here; we need to be with the kids." Collyn encouraged the teachers to share student progress with her and she continued to emphasize an open door office policy. Collyn used continuous school walkabouts to carefully survey the facility and implement physical changes to benefit student learning and teacher preparation, and to improve the general school atmosphere. These changes resulted in a larger kindergarten space to accommodate the growth in class sizes, a reorganized staff work room to create additional space and light, a neater, more organized and attractive front entrance and main office. Collyn's supportive actions conveyed her belief that a pleasing physical environment had a positive effect on attitude, contributed to student achievement, enhanced school culture and demonstrated the organizational values held by the school community. Drawing on her extensive consulting background ("I notice everything and I monitor a lot of this stuff"), and her strong work ethic ("it's because I come in here and I'm on task"), Collyn continuously demonstrated her concern and support for the growth potential of staff members and her sincere belief in their ability to improve student learning.

Integral daily practices for Lenore included continuous visits to classrooms, walkabouts down the hallways, informal discussions in the staff room and shared after school bus supervision. Lenore planned for this increased visibility at Eaton School as a way to improve upon past experiences where she felt she hadn't been visible enough. "That's been an area for me this year that I've really tried to concentrate on, coming into a new school, wanting to be visible in the school." Visibility for Lenore meant an opportunity to demonstrate her professionalism, the congruency of her words and actions, her wish to support teaching and learning, and her desire to be open and approachable. Lenore kept a written record of which classes she visited each day as a way to ensure fairness in the amount of time she spent in each classroom. "I certainly want people to feel that I am making an effort to get to know everyone quite equitably and not be perceived as having favorites." Lenore regularly sought out teaching opportunities that included reading stories, participating in dramatic skits and teaching short lessons in subject areas of her choice. This voluntary teaching gave Lenore an opportunity to interact directly with the students, to model instructional strategies, to offer teachers some bonus preparation time, and to demonstrate her teaching and performance abilities. Lenore believed that demonstrating her knowledge and skills was an important way to enhance her credibility and reputation with these teachers. Dean (1999) supports the idea of principals "playing a part in the actual teaching" (p. 37), as it permits them to remain in close touch with classroom realities (p. 37).

Visibility and modeling strategies allowed Collyn and Lenore the opportunities to silently enact their expectations for others. Blase and Kirby (1992) ascertain that without exception, "teachers reported that modeling influences them to behave in ways consistent with the principal's implicit expectations" (p. 105).

Considering professional development in relation to school truths, Collyn insisted: "we have to structure for success and I don't know if I look at it more as the end driving the means but it may be that. Is it the kids' abilities?

Right now, I don't think so. I think the teaching has a lot to do with it. Sometimes you write kids off before you should and I won't deny that happens here. Attitude has a big part to play." Collyn's attitude fit with Greenleaf's (1977) description of an aspect of servant leadership: "the servant as leader always empathizes, always accepts the person but sometimes refuses to accept some of the person's effort or performance as good enough" (p. 20). In consultation with the staff, and responding to the need to look critically at the academic program, Collyn selected curriculum alignment as the main topic for sustained professional development. "I think we're going to be much happier knowing that those long-range plans are actually meeting the curriculum expectations." The curriculum alignment process, which varied for each teacher, included the use of consultants and allowed time for critical review and reflection. This process matched the key conditions identified by King and Newmann (2000) for teacher learning: ability to concentrate on instruction and student outcomes in the specific contexts in which they teach; sustained opportunities to study, to experiment with and to receive helpful feedback on specific innovations; collaboration with professional peers, both within and outside of their schools, and influence over the substance and process of professional development (p. 576).

De Pree (1997) believes that "the nourishment of individuals lies at the heart of vitality in organizations, and the nourishment of individuals begins with the opportunity to learn" (p. 105). Collyn demonstrated her support of this belief by implementing other professional activities that contributed to staff members' individual and collective professional growth. These activities included helping teachers to set appropriate goals for students ("as often as I can, I go into the classrooms and see what's going on"), to locate suitable resources, and to build teamwork to share ideas and instructional strategies, and to discuss student achievement levels. Lambert (1998) emphasizes new knowledge that shows that unless teachers are learning together, they will not be able to create engaging learning experiences for children, and Birman (2000) believes that "students' learning will be transformed only if teachers'

classroom practices reflect high standards" (p. 28). Collyn also implemented facilitating processes for helping the teachers and the secretary to improve their technical skills, and thus enable them to feel more competent. These activities not only brought about changes in skills and attitudes, but also increased teacher motivation and their willingness to take more risks. Horowitz contends, "there is more likelihood that there will be cooperation in bringing about change if the individual staff member feels good about himself or herself" (in Hodysh & McIntosh, 1999, p. 111).

A professional development day organized early in the year at Eaton School focused on the link between computers and the curriculum. Lenore did not promote an on-going school wide professional development activity as she was unable to determine a specific need for one. Since the student achievement test results at Eaton School were excellent, Lenore was confident in the strength of the academic programs and the professional competence of the teachers. "I can't identify anyone who I feel is a weak link here. I think that this is a very competent staff and I think that they are confident in their ways even though some of them are relatively new." Lenore admitted that staff members do not perceive a need to improve student achievement. "It's a real challenge to try and change that way of thinking because people get to the point of, what more can I do?" But Lenore supported Checkley's (2000) belief that the key role of the contemporary principal is "to serve as an instructional leader who, in turn, promotes teacher growth" (p.1). So to further enhance teacher performance and student learning, Lenore relied heavily on modeling teaching strategies, always "conscious of using a particular process because I want to model to the staff that this is a process that I think has value for them."

To facilitate further professional development, Lenore acted as a mentor to the beginning teachers at the school, as she wanted "teachers who are both new and lack experience to feel that they are supported, that they have what they need to be successful in their jobs." She regularly observed in their classrooms and offered positive and constructive feedback. Rowley

(1999) contends that a good mentor is "highly committed to the task of helping beginning teachers find success and gratification in their new work" (p. 20).

Past, present and future scripts played out simultaneously in the daily practices of both principals.

Mixing The Sound

Sound and images are connected in movies, with the sound primarily used to complement or contradict the content of the visual image. Words are the most obvious, and commonly understood means of telling a story. However, as we watch a movie, we hear not only dialogue, but also music and perhaps other sound effects. These combinations of sound and image set the tone and mood of a film. Like the images in a film, the sound is edited or molded to suit the needs of the individual movie. Decisions are made as to the appropriateness of the dialogue and music score, how much of it to use, and where to use it. But sound is also used in other ways. A particular sound can be used to connect two or more different images, indicating to the audience that there is a connection between them. Repetition of a certain musical theme throughout the film can serve to link shots, scenes, and sequences. Specific background music can foreshadow a change in mood or signal the viewer to a dramatic shift in plot. As well, selected use of silence is often used to provoke certain responses from an audience. Filmmakers employ a device called a sound mixer to blend sound together at the right volume and with the right emphasis to create a unified sound track that is appropriate to what the film director is trying to communicate.

As in film, sound is an important feature in the moving picture of schools. Assorted sounds are connected to the pictures projected on a school set, and together they continuously move and change, either in harmony or discord. Within this interactive environment, Collyn and Lenore were continuously communicating. They edited and adjusted their sounds in support of Evans' (1999) belief that in schools, words establish a "certain

tone...and sense of what is to be valued" (p.10). Movement in the hallways, classrooms, offices, and playgrounds provided frequent opportunities for both principals to engage in formal and informal verbal exchanges. Language, according to Kerby (1991), is not simply "a tool for communicating or mirroring back what we otherwise discover in our reality but is itself an important formative part of that reality, part of its very texture" (p. 2). Gronn (1983) exposes "layers and levels of talk" in schools that he claims are necessary and powerful for making known the speaker's version of something to others that must be attended to and to get others to do things, "not only to take note or account of what is said, but to be influenced by what is said" (p. 17). However, Collyn and Lenore were aware that each member of their respective school communities had a subjective understanding of school life, and that capturing one another's understandings would be challenging. They were under no illusions that what they said would be interpreted as intended, since successful communication depended so much on the personalities, values, and behaviors of all of the participants.

Collyn and Lenore centered their talk around student growth, development, and learning. They regularly communicated to staff members a belief in their teaching professionalism, a respect for their judgment and a willingness to support their efforts. Collyn and Lenore both sought out opportunities to fit their actions to their words. They spoke openly and frequently about their personal values, beliefs, likes, and dislikes, and drew on these, with discretion, to guide their behaviours, interactions and decisions. Collyn and Lenore both valued relationships and they believed that open and honest communication and supportive dialogue were ways to help establish them.

I enjoyed Collyn's easy and relaxed manner. She used humour regularly, claiming, "What you see is what you get." She set the tone at Kildonan School as one of seriousness and caring, hard work and fun. "I'm the leader here so I need to be enthusiastic, but I come in here and I'm on task." Collyn admitted to me that her approach had lightened up over time, and with experience, as

she came to realize that it wasn't necessary to always be so serious about everything. She believed in the importance of building rapport, maintaining: "if I like you I will be likelier to listen to what it is you have to say than if I don't." In the early weeks of school, Collyn's growing relationship with the school secretary was apparent, as I noticed Collyn's reliance on her ("Oh wise one") for school, student, parent and community information. I observed Collyn approach staff members with praise and support but also with honesty and positive suggestions for continued growth. She persisted in telling staff "as often as I can how I feel about what they're doing." Collyn communicated respect for the traditions of Kildonan School by continuing, at the request of the teachers, to do morning announcements over the intercom while admitting her discomfort with this practice.

In my school journal, I described Collyn as a principal who kept in touch with the pulse of the school through her accessibility and active involvement in children's learning. She regularly visited classrooms to work with students and to support teachers; she hung out in the office, hallways and lunchrooms to chat with students, parents and support staff. She smiled and greeted people as they passed by. It became a common sight for me to watch smiling students parade in and out of Collyn's office, proud to have been asked to present their latest achievements to the principal. Collyn responded to each child's display with encouragement but she also recognized these brief opportunities with individual children as teachable moments. Later, Collyn followed up these sessions with a personal congratulatory note to each child. And as a way of keeping her office a positive environment, Collyn chose to take care of any discipline problems in another room.

Collyn voiced to me her support for the notion that "an educator needs a lot of common sense and an ability to respond to situations." Her view corresponds to de Pree's (1997) insistence in the importance of bringing "intuition to transitions in addition to the analytical processes we automatically apply" (p. 36). During the first week of school, Collyn's intuition counseled her

not to refuse to participate in the writing of lottery grant applications, but she secretly cringed at the required time commitment. As she came to know the school community better, Collyn recognized the importance of helping the parent council to secure this type of funding. She indicated that her involvement in grant applications became a meaningful way for her to incorporate the parents' ideas into the ongoing dialogue of the school.

Lenore approached her new position at Eaton School with a professional demeanor that conveyed her serious attitude to learning, and helped to establish a purposeful and thoughtful tone. She explained that her conduct was a response in part to what she believed the parents in this community expected, and to her own beliefs and values about schooling and her administrative role. "Professional demeanor, to me, conveys a certain level of seriousness. Not that it doesn't mean you can't have fun, but when people talk about children, talk about our job, I talk about that in a way that is serious and really positive, really respectful. I think that it's important because it conveys that professionalism. I think it says that I want to be taken seriously, that I want to be respected. Until such time as I have earned that, that people know me, and know that I am credible, respect me for the job I do, then I think that I personally create a certain demeanor so that this is the impression that they're going to get from me to begin with until such time as I have truly earned their respect by what I do and say. I think it's essential." Participating as an actor in a humorous skit during reading week, Lenore demonstrated her ability to inject some fun into her role during times she felt were appropriate.

Lenore vebalized her desire to support teachers in their work by suggesting excess monetary resources be used to hire teacher interns. She also supported staff requests for additional personnel; a permanent part-time computer technician and an artist in residence. Lenore volunteered to read to students and to teach brief classes for teachers as a way to role model specific teaching strategies as well as to provide extra preparation time for teachers. These classroom opportunities gave Lenore a chance to

demonstrate her teaching expertise to the staff and to the community. Along with scheduled classroom visits, I observed Lenore often chatting informally with teachers about their teaching practices and about their students' learning.

Lenore's belief in open, clear and honest communication manifested itself in her desire to regularly explain her views and actions to members of the school community. She thought of herself as a collaborator who supported mediation and openness as a means to negotiate differences. "I do try to mediate difficulties. I do try to compromise or come to some resolution that's satisfactory." But she also admitted to not always being successful and she was willing to learn from her mistakes. "I just wasn't successful with this one for whatever reason. I went and talked to the vice-principal and he basically said that in the past, she's demonstrated that she's a difficult parent to deal with both at the classroom level and at the administrative level."

The Sounds of Silence

Dialogue is often used by characters in films to narrate the meaning of events in their lives. So the recent introduction of Dolby sound to movies plays a critical role in bringing the physical presence of the voice closer, thus allowing audiences to hear the finer details of voice texture and tone. But the "voice" in film does not consist only of words since filmmakers show as well as tell their stories. Equally important to any performance, then, are body language and behaviours that combine with the actual words spoken, and the accents, and nuances of phrasing, to convey additional elements of character and meaning. As well, each film genre has its symbolic language (the trench coat in a detective movie, the movements in a Western movie) that accumulate tremendous significance and emotional weight in films, and therefore actors who look the part are often more likely to get the part.

Similarly, the dialogue at Kildonan and Eaton schools stretched beyond the spoken words to include the silent sounds that surrounded them. Collyn and Lenore's body language, intuition, presence, and accessibility

were silent sounds that accompanied the flow of conversations. Their smiles and frowns, winks and finger taps, shoulder shrugs and muscle twitches all contained accents and nuances of phrasing similar to their spoken words. Ramsey (1999) maintains that certain mannerisms, behaviors and looks can immediately project an impression of authority and confidence. He claims: "if you look and act like a leader, it's a lot easier to be perceived as a leader, to be accepted as a leader, and, in fact, to actually be a leader" (p. 136). Ramsay cautions that "people will be accepted and respected as leaders more quickly and easily if the way they dress, behave, and present themselves falls within the norms of the culture of the organization they are trying to lead." He believes that "you don't have to lose your individuality or become a carbon copy of anyone else," but that "if you want to be readily perceived as a leader, your appearance and demeanor should fit in" (p. 136).

Collyn acknowledged: "I don't wear suits here everyday because if I did that would be a barrier. I want to talk to them about what their kids are doing outside of school. I don't want to be someone who's moving away from anybody, I want to be approachable.... There's a lot of me second-guessing what they're thinking about me. So perception is everything and your gut instinct has to be there and you have to have some kind of knowledge of how people respond and what their expectations are of you." Projecting a positive image within the school was important to Collyn because "they don't know me yet. I guess I don't want to project the impression that I'm an ogre or that I'm negative or that I just want one thing." Collyn believed in paying attention to how she presented herself to the parent population, and she stressed the importance of community perception. "My theory is that your parents can make or break you because they're the ones who are out there in the community at large and if they have an opinion they are not the ones to be quiet about it. If you cross them for some reason I think you can suffer dearly. No matter what you do it can be undermined. It's one group you have to get in with early on. I think it's important to meet the parents, remember their names, talk to them when you see them, and support them whenever

possible." Collyn confirmed that "knowing what other people think of me really makes a big difference. It's too bad it had to wait until May" (when she received strong, positive support from the staff).

Similar to Collyn's way of thinking, Lenore confessed: "when I come into a school like this, knowing that the vast majority of parents themselves are professionals, I want to present a professional demeanor. I want to dress professionally and to present myself as articulate, as well spoken because I believe that's what they would respect being that they're working as professionals in jobs where they and others around them conduct themselves like that for the most part. But if I were going to an inner-city school, I would present myself differently. I would still be the same person ultimately but I would also take my cues from other people I see around me, the staff and the parents and so on. I don't know if I would start off that differently but I think I might scare some people because of my demeanor.... I think one of the things that we have to think about is how we are perceived and what we have to do to gain that credibility and respect."

The Silent "I"

When Collyn and Lenore changed schools, each experienced a new beginning—a movement away from the comfort, stability and safety of the known to a place that was familiar yet strange. Collyn admitted: "I think I walked into some real unknowns as far as what was waiting for me." Lenore further explained: "This first year someplace is a year of firsts, the first time you do the kindergarten open house, the first time you do the grade six graduation—all of those things. You don't have the traditions and you don't have a history with participating in those things." Bateson (1994) believes that new learning requires the loss of status that goes with being a beginner once again and that it is this contrast that makes learning possible (p. 82). Lenore acknowledged this learning curve. "Every once in awhile I'm brought up short because I don't realize something. You don't know about things until you experience them in some instances, like the whole enrollment process. So I

am still experiencing some firsts." Coupled with these new beginnings were the challenges associated with establishing new relationships and the frustrations associated with the unreliability of information. Early in the year, Collyn conceded: "the position I'm in right now is just figuring out still who I can and can't trust, and who I would ask to do something beyond, who I can talk to that is serious about teaching, who's here just, "this is me," biding their time till retirement."

Veterans within the school district, Collyn and Lenore arrived at their new schools with old baggage in hand, as personal and professional gossip had preceded their entries. Collyn remarked: "I know that at first there was a lot of discussion about me because of the differences between myself and the former principal." Lenore discovered that the teachers at Eaton School had actively pursued finding out about her before she arrived. Collyn and Lenore were not unsettled by these backroom discussions. Rather, as seasoned administrators, Collyn and Lenore exuded confidence in their knowledge and ability to handle the job of being a principal well, with intelligence and skill. Separately, they concurred with Starratt (1993) that if they "possess the ability and talent to make the organization run," then "using that same ability and talent, they can make the organization run *better*" (p. 154). Even though both principals acknowledged that their positive reputations in the district had been established already, they still wanted to be perceived as doing a good job.

Given this level of confidence and desire to succeed, but aware of information gaps and prior gossip, how did Collyn and Lenore unfold their identities in their new environments? Goffman (1959) explores this presentation of self. He believes that we all interact with others to some degree as actors on a stage, and that we present ourselves in ways that are most beneficial to us in any given situation. He maintains that our presentations change from stage to stage, depending on the context, and that some people are better at this presentation of self than others. Lenore admitted: "I think that in my job I tend to try to maintain a very professional demeanor most of the time, not 100% of the time, but most of the time. When

you have an opportunity to have a party together or a social event together where you can let your hair down a little bit, I think a different side of me comes out and as a result of that, for example, we share jokes, we share those moments and we can joke about them and we can tease each other about things that happened there that we wouldn't have been able to before because people didn't know me like that." Bateson (1994) believes that the self is put at risk during transitions, but she perceives this process of readjusting one's self as an opportunity to learn, to grow and inevitably to change. Bateson believes that in unpredictable and unfamiliar contexts, "we improvise and struggle to respond... learning new skills and transmuting discomfort and bewilderment into valuable information about difference even, at the same time, becoming someone different." (p. 74). Mesmer (1999) contends that identity is constructed "in accordance with where we are, what we are doing, why we are doing it, who is around us, and what they are doing" (p. 36).

For Collyn and Lenore, discovering their individual school identities was an open and visible process. Wherever they went, it was natural for them to be noticed and to gain attention as a result of the status of their administrative positions. Yet amidst all of this attention and activity, an inherent isolation was evident and perhaps best captured by Dr. Seuss' refrain: "All alone! Whether you like it or not, alone will be something you'll be quite a lot." As Collyn explained, "you've got to be close and you've got to somehow have that little bit of an enigma. You've still got to have some kind of mystery. I find not only is that true with the principal and the parents, but it's true with the principal and the staff, being comfortable and yet knowing that there's someone who can make a wise choice, who can handle the situation coolly or without being, it's not really too close to it, but it's just that there's someone you can go to. The buck stops here and that has to happen between the parents and the administration and it has to happen between the staff and the administration too. We can't all be buddy-buddies. There are going to be times when people do some things that you have to reproach

them on and it's going to be very hard to do unless there's that little bit of distance. But you don't want it to be huge. How do you do it? Well, you have to weigh everything that you do. Are you going to laugh at that joke or are you not going to laugh at that joke in the staff-room?" Lenore admitted that "as I've become more comfortable with my identity in the school and the way that people perceive me or I perceive they perceive me, then I am more prepared to let the other side of me show a little bit, be a little less formal."

Embracing the belief that they were sufficiently prepared with the necessary experience and knowledge, Collyn and Lenore were able to venture excitedly into the complexity and uncertainty of their new situations. Collyn confessed: "I've never questioned my competence," and Lenore admitted: "I have confidence in my own abilities and I have confidence that people perceive that I do a good job." They both maintained, as Geertz (1973) does that "it is not necessary to know everything in order to understand something" (p. 20). Collyn and Lenore exhibited what Greenleaf (1977) identifies as "dependable certainty," a confidence that one's preparation is adequate enough to venture into the experience without pre-set answers but with assurance that creative insight will emerge when needed, and be right because it is generated in the situation (p. 188). This confidence did, however, fluctuate at times between maintaining faith in themselves and doubts about their success. At one point, Collyn's confidence was evident. "I'm not going to worry about some of those things. I'll just make up for it in different ways." At another point, she wondered whether a particular comment by a teacher was "a wakeup call to me that maybe I should be doing more of this covering and more of this going into the classroom and taking on their job to free them up so they can do an administrative task." Bateson (1994) supports this openness to self-critique because she believes that "more flexible boundaries of the self open up attention to the environment that may ultimately be essential to survival" (p. 74).

I observed Collyn demonstrating her attentiveness to the school environment by conveying openness, respect and patience. She convinced

staff members that she would listen to them both professionally and personally. "I'm really thankful for some patience. When parents come to see me too, it's basically the same kind of attitude. You have to value that their opinion is their opinion but then you also have to have them explain it to you because sometimes what you think it is, and what they think it is, is not at all what it is. So, being patient, just really drawing it out. It goes a long way towards making good decisions, sound decisions." Through empathy, Collyn endeavored to create a receptive climate for people to express their feelings and concerns—to speak from the heart about what really mattered to them and she continuously adjusted her verbal and written communications to meet individual needs.

Although Collyn believed in being honest and open, she acknowledged the importance of selecting her words carefully. "I can't be as glib as I used to be because they don't know me yet." She admitted that it was often better to say less than more. "People here respond differently and I haven't quite learnt yet how discreet I have to be. I've already had a few people make comments, or joking comments, that I find hurtful. I don't think they're funny, and that's because they don't know me either and I don't know them." Sometimes, Collyn found that no response was the best. "I think it's only normal to expect those kinds of comparisons to be made every so often. I just don't respond to them." There were other times when Collyn was uncertain about how to respond. "When I told the secretary about it, she said parents in this area are low class. Isn't that something? I didn't know how to respond to that because I just wanted to take her and shake her and say, 'Well, you know, one of the best ways to learn anything or to change things is by modeling. And if you're going to have that mindset then you're going to be treating them not the way that they should be, or not the way they deserve to be.'" Collyn also acknowledged her need at times for a confidant. "Trust is a huge, huge issue here. There's a lot of confidential stuff that goes on. I have parents calling me and telling me, 'Please don't tell the teacher.' You know, you get to a point where you just kind of have to say something to somebody." Collyn valued

professional conversation as a means to clarify and examine her motives and actions. She admitted: "talking has clarified a lot of things for me. I express to you in a different way than I express to myself because I have to give things context and I have to give things a reason."

Establishing an identity at Eaton School was a conscious concern for Lenore. "That's been an area for me this year that I've really tried to concentrate on, coming into a new school, wanting to be visible in the school, wanting to establish my credibility with all of the stakeholders." Lenore was led by this concern to pay attention to what the community expected of her, to practice what Bateson (1994) describes as "a deeper noticing of the world" (p. 109) around her, to determine where to focus her energies. Lenore admitted to me that her identity had "always been a concern. It's always been an issue in schools for me but I haven't been as deliberately conscious of what it is that I do to influence that. I think paying closer attention has come with experience, very much so." Lenore realized this closer attention through "observations, conversations, just watching and listening." For Lenore, observations at staff meetings "were a good indicator of who the informal school leaders are, who sits together, who speaks up, what happens if a person speaks up in support of, or non-support of something. How does that influence the group?" Closer attention translated for Lenore into support for open, honest and sensitive communication. In surfacing the report card issue, Lenore "brought it up at a meeting that I had only with the division one teachers. I just tried to be very open and very honest but I also tried to be very sensitive to what I anticipated their reaction to be." Lenore encouraged staff members, through questioning, to pay closer attention as well and to promote positive interaction amongst themselves, to acknowledge and recognize people who help them. "What is one thing positive that has improved for you already this year and if someone else was responsible for that have you told them about it? Have you acknowledged the fact that they were responsible? Have you thanked them?" Lenore also specifically posed questions to elicit feedback from staff members, and then listened thoughtfully

to their responses. "I then asked the staff at the next meeting for some feedback: what did you like about this process? What did you not like? If we were to do this again, what suggestions would you make to improve the process?" Regular conversations with the vice principal, early in the school year, provided some information continuity for Lenore and an opportunity for her to vent. Like Collyn, Lenore valued collegial conversation and viewed it as the most effective way to continue to learn, to examine and reassess her priorities, and to grow professionally. "I think I like things practical. Sitting and talking like this is truly, for me, how I improve, how I reflect on things, how I get more ideas, more so than reading. I like attending conferences and in-services. What I look for are practical ideas."

In my role as a participant observer, I recognized that identity for Collyn and Lenore also meant, "I am who I am not yet" (Greene, in Ayers, W. & Miller, J. L., 1998, p. 120). They supported de Pree's (1997) conviction that transition was "a growing and a maturing and an understanding and wisdom-gaining process ... a process of learning who we are" (p. 35). They conceded that although their learning to date was valuable, and that the change of schools allowed them an opportunity to apply this past learning to a new context, that this was not enough. Lenore commented: "I guess it comes down to being confident about what I'm doing and if through this process I change, or grow, or do things differently, then I've really gained a lot." Both principals communicated a realistic self-image, acknowledging their strengths as well as their limitations and an openness and responsiveness to further learning. Their sincerity was evident in their commitment to reflection as they continuously examined issues and clarified priorities in relation to students, schools, themselves and the process of education.

The Sounds of Conviction

Throughout a motion picture, the narrator, by speaking to the audience in a continuous sound track, can unify what might otherwise be fragmented and disconnected visual images. The tone of the narrator's voice, along with

inflections, pauses and silences, can contribute to the overall mood of the film, while the language chosen by the narrator often carries more emotion and nuance than the actor's physical presence. A leader's stance can be thought about in a similar fashion to that of the narrator in a film. Manthey and Thompson (1999) delineate the concept of stance in a learning environment as "an attitude, a bearing, a way of encountering [others] based on a set of core values about kids and their learning potential" (p. 12). They claim that stance begins in a physical way, that "there is a posture, a way we hold our bodies, that can communicate ... a sense of acceptance, respect, and expectations" (p. 12). Manthey and Thompson contend that assuming a stance is unavoidable. The trick, they say, is "to make sure that your stance conveys attitudes, emotions and expectations that will build, rather than tear down, a community of learners" (p. 13).

Like the narrator in a film, Collyn and Lenore each adopted a particular stance immediately upon arriving at their new schools. In a performance, Ball (1984) contends, "It doesn't matter whether an actor walks to the left or to the right of the sofa, and it doesn't make any difference whether his shoes are beige or black. But it does make a difference whether or not you have chosen a play that you believe in" (p. 26). Ball emphasizes that the early and big decisions are the ones that count" (p. 26). During my observations of and conversations with Collyn and Lenore, the stance they each embraced resonated loudly and clearly. Both principals expressed themselves in ways that conveyed their values and beliefs, ways that told me who they were, how they stood in the world, and why they did what they did. Their stance was further illuminated visually in their physical demeanors, and orally through changes in voice tone, accents, intensity and volume. Their attitudes were cemented in their choices of language and timing, and contributed to a clarity and rhythm in their soundtracks, which sent out powerful messages. Hart and Bredeson (1996) suggest that underestimating the importance of values and beliefs diminishes our understanding of what it takes to be an effective principal. They contend that deeply embedded values are fundamental to the

way we view the world, that they correspond to assumptions and beliefs we hold about things such as "relationships, organizational structures, the purposes of educational beliefs in a democracy, human growth and learning, equity, individual liberty and autonomy" (p. 249). Horowitz maintains: "there isn't much room for compromise on matters we really value" (in Hodysh & McIntosh, 1999, p. 111). However, he concedes that sustaining one's stance can be very difficult because of the "constant movement back and forth." Although Horowitz sympathizes with the struggle, he stresses the importance of maintaining "your vision as you face particular issues" (p. 112).

Collyn's personal beliefs about children and leadership were challenged immediately at Kildonan School by her discomfort with the established discipline policy. "I can't discipline 5 hours a day, especially when I'm trying to do the opposite. I'm really trying to be positive and I'm trying to be visible. My personal belief statement says fair is not equal and I firmly believe that. There's always a rationale behind the things that I do and I will explain it when asked, and I've found that because I've been that way, it's been respected." Collyn was determined to work collaboratively with the teachers to improve the communication surrounding behaviour issues. She advocated for mutual responsibility, stating: "I will do my part, but teachers also need to do their part. And that's why we need to discuss it at a staff meeting. There has to be an understanding that if kids are sent to the office, then I need a piece of paper explaining why and what they expect me to do with that child. I need to know what it is and what happened in the classroom." In a move away from the practices of her predecessor, Collyn chose to lessen her immediate involvement with individual student behaviour contracts. "The teacher is going to have to take some of the responsibility. Period."

Collyn identified one of her greatest strengths as valuing people and empathizing with their situations. "I guess you have to put yourself in their places and with their constraints." She balanced her firm stance on responsibility with understanding and flexibility. "I think I'm getting far more by

saying, 'Why don't you just go home and do your report cards for an hour? You'll have some peace before the kids get home from school.'" Yet notwithstanding this empathy for others, Collyn drew on the trust she has in her intelligence and her beliefs as an educator to make tough decisions and to accept the subsequent consequences of those decisions. Collyn expected teachers to put students first and she matched these words with her actions. The decision to eliminate the role of the school counsellor was not easy. "It's not that I want to take away somebody's support but it just doesn't make sense on our budget to spend money on that.... When you have to take a designation away, that's difficult. When you reclassify somebody to a different category, it's difficult. I'm the bad guy, so be it. My roles and responsibilities are for the kids to be number one and we have to provide for them the best way we can and if it doesn't make everybody 100% happy, that's too bad. Parents included."

Collyn's confidence in her personal strength and in her ability to do what she believes is right for children, played a critical role in all of her decision-making. "What I've decided to do is I'm going to be the principal of this school and I'm going to do what's right for the kids. I'm going to do what's right for the teachers and I'm not going to worry about it. I won't be insensitive but I won't be ruled by tears. I will not be ruled by accusations or things that I feel are weird." Collyn acknowledged that the incident with the Kindergarten teacher and the daycare had hurt their relationship. " She still isn't able to look at me in the eye." Yet Collyn admitted: "I still look at her in the eye. I know I did the right thing."

Ultimately, Collyn operated from a deeply felt moral base that became the litmus test for what she lived by. "I just think there are limits to what I can do too and I have to live with myself and that's probably the hardest person you ever have to live with. When you make a decision, that's my measuring stick, can I live with it? Is it going to keep me awake at night if I don't do something, or if I do something? That's my measuring stick. That's the one I

always use. Can I sleep at night? If not, then I didn't do it right and I have to fix it."

On Lenore's arrival at Eaton School, she found herself confronted by an unresolved instructional situation. With limited knowledge of the school and community, Lenore translated her personal values and beliefs into action. Committed to open and honest communication and collaborative decision-making, Lenore first met with the vice principal to talk about process and possibilities and then gathered together all of the teachers who were directly involved. "I called them all into a meeting, opened it up for discussion, and they all had reasons why they thought it should not be them." Lenore soon recognized that with no one willing to come forward to accept the position, the decision would be hers to make. Confident in her ability to make a good choice, Lenore clarified her position for the teachers. "I did say to them that my decision would not be based on seniority, that I would be looking at previous experiences and previous assignments; that I did perceive this one/two combination to be a more challenging assignment than a straight grade one or a straight grade two; and that part of my thinking was that we all need to share the challenges as well as the successes of our school.... I also said that I thought it was unfortunate that we perceived that this was a negative assignment and that somehow we need to change that because if we perceive that then it's no wonder our public perceives that."

Initially, Lenore was surprised by the chosen teacher's thorough questioning of her decision, as well as by the teacher's request for time to think about it further. "I was taken aback a little bit by her request, but I didn't say anything because my question to her would have been, 'What do you mean by that? What do you mean you need time to think about it?' So, I thought, 'No, I'll just leave it.'" The restraint shown by Lenore during this exchange, along with her subsequent praise for the teacher's efforts, revealed her deep respect for the professionalism of the staff at Eaton School and her commitment to support staff members in their endeavors. "I have complimented her since, on the professional way that she handled the

process and her response to the whole assignment. I've also complimented her on the fact that she's doing just an excellent job with the assignment."

A different situation, again early in the school year, provided Lenore with another opportunity to translate her personal values and beliefs into action. This incident involved a young child who was taking liberties with the gumball machine in Lenore's office while the mother observed without comment. Lenore believed that the child's behaviour was inappropriate and she was waiting for the mother to address the issue. "I mean, the candies are here for people to eat and certainly I don't mind that at all but I would like the courtesy of either being asked, 'Do you mind if' or 'May I have' or, you know, that sort of thing or offering myself. So when she didn't say anything I did and she took great offense to that." Lenore informed the parent that she expected her office to be treated with some respect and some courtesy and that "since you chose not to teach him what was appropriate, I chose to do that for you."

Lenore admitted that the incident was unpleasant and "it weighed heavily on my mind last night, and this morning. What can I do to try and put this right or should I do anything?" Despite her sensitivity and thoughtfulness, Lenore projected confidence in her position, insisting: "I'm not going to fall on my knees and sell my soul here because I don't think I acted inappropriately."

Lenore did not yield to negative comments she received about changes she implemented at staff meetings. Instead, she offered a compromise: "I'm going to do them anyway because that's me and people are going to have to accept that, and I will speak to them at the staff meeting." Lenore confessed her desire to be liked, but more importantly her desire to act morally. "Yes, I want to be liked. Yes, I want to have people think positively. I hope that they will believe that I listen, that I do have a point of view that's based on knowledge, experience, expertise, thought and that they will respect that. I certainly want to behave with integrity." This desire strengthened Lenore's commitment to do what she believed was right. "I have my beliefs and my opinions, and while I want to be open to hearing other points of view and giving the person an opportunity to express their feelings,

I'm not prepared to sell-out. I guess that's basically it. If I believe strongly about something and can rationalize that and explain that belief in a way that makes sense to me and feels comfortable to me then I wouldn't change that unless someone came up with something that I haven't thought of before that would make me again stop and think and perhaps change my opinion. But I certainly want to believe that for me what I believe is right will always win out over wanting to be liked and to me, that's the big picture."

As I have illustrated in the examples above, Collyn and Lenore both held very definite personal beliefs and values, which informed and governed their practices. The stance they assumed was inherent in each perform"ance" and in every circum "stance," and they continuously clarified and communicated these beliefs to staff, students and parents.

Focusing the Lens

Manufacturers of modern movie cameras claim that all filmmakers need to do is to point and shoot. Technically, they are correct. However, the challenge for filmmakers arises in deciding what they should point the camera at and how much of it to include in the picture area. Whereas still photographers have the advantage of being able to enlarge portions of their negatives or trim their prints to create a pleasing composition, filmmakers must do all of their composing in the viewfinder at the time of the shooting, deciding immediately what to show and what to leave out. If they try to show everything, the result is often a blurred mess in which nothing stands out clearly. In moving to new schools, I believe that Collyn and Lenore were confronted with a similar challenge to that of filmmakers. As they positioned themselves on new school sets, amidst continually moving multiple images and diverse characters, their eyes could be likened to that of a movie camera. Collyn and Lenore were faced with the dilemma of glancing in many different directions, but fortunately I perceived that neither was in danger of their vision becoming distorted or confused. Both principals had their lenses specifically

directed towards enhancing student learning. Firm in their belief that learning was much broader than just achievement tests, Collyn and Lenore focused on creating positive relationships, stimulating resource-rich learning environments, promoting effective and collaborative teaching strategies, and advancing celebrations of learning.

In the world of motion pictures, the myth of the film director who sits in a canvas chair and shouts directions through a megaphone persists. But in reality, filmmaking is a collaborative art, the work of many hands. Both principals in this study supported strong positive leadership. But, similar to filmmaking, they also believed that successful leadership in schools was "a professional group production" (Hart & Bredeson, 1996, p. 189). Although both principals acknowledged the value and uniqueness of their own contributions, they saw themselves as part of a team of professionals working together to accomplish their mutual goals. I therefore observed Collyn and Lenore arranging their days around people. As Collyn remarked, "I think what's important for me is to get to know people." Like Arendt, both principals believed that "for excellence, the presence of others is always required" (in Ayers & Miller, 1998, p. 33).

Both principals chose to focus on relationship building through continuous written and oral communication. They used dialogue as a way to support and encourage others, to engage staff members in professional conversations that promoted collaboration, information sharing, and reflection. They attended to the comfort and well-being of staff members. Collyn confessed to "doing things more for the teachers," including improvements to classrooms, staff work areas and hallways. "Some things are so small, but as far as teacher comfort and teacher well-being, it makes a difference." Lenore installed a fresh water system and a new coffee machine in the staff room, although the coffee machine was subsequently removed. She encouraged one of the teachers to experiment with a new audio system to improve sound in the classroom.

Both principals valued honesty in relationships, and endeavored to be openly transparent about their personal beliefs. According to Treslan and Ryan (1986), teachers are much more responsive to principals' influence attempts based on human relations skills and technical expertise rather than on hierarchical authority (p. 5).

Thus, through their choices for picture composition, both Collyn and Lenore sought to set the stage for improved student learning in an open and committed environment.

VI. The Moving Pictures in Review

How then has the application of three components of film making to two succession experiences helped me to better understand this phenomenon?

In isolating and reviewing the script, the sound and the focus of two principals during the first year of their successions, I was able to narrow my researcher's lens for a more focused attentiveness to some of the specifics of those experiences. I found that looking closely and attentively at these key elements, which I believe are inherent in the process, has expanded my notions about the complexities involved in the moving pictures of succession. This closer look also unveiled portraits of two confident and intelligent educators who, although different in personality and background experience, arrived at their new schools with similar beliefs and intentions.

Both Collyn and Lenore exuded confidence in their knowledge and ability to handle the job of being a principal and I observed them both easily managing the routine aspects of the job. Both principals were firmly committed to student learning and growth in ways that encompassed more than achievement tests. They valued continuous professional improvement for themselves and others. They considered themselves strong instructional leaders and demonstrated their love of teaching by blending the teaching and leadership roles. They were, as Starratt (1993) says, "inside the drama" (p. 139). It was important to both of them to be highly visible, to be in close touch with the daily realities of the school and to model effective teaching strategies. Collyn frequented the classrooms, often working individually with children on their assignments, participating in group lessons or presenting information. Lenore participated in dramatic skits, coached the running club, visited classrooms regularly and often volunteered to teach individual classes. Starratt believes that leaders must be "players within the drama," that "the cast needs to have a sense of the leader's involvement in the action," or "they lose their credibility with the other players" (p. 138).

Both Collyn and Lenore began the new school year intent on understanding their school cultures, on cultivating positive school climates and on building trusting relationships with students, staff members and parents. To achieve these goals, they sought open and honest communication through consistency in their words and actions and through careful observation and sensitive listening, believing like Bateson that "the willingness to do what needs to be done is rooted in attention to what is" (1994, p. 109). Both principals believed in the importance of nourishing the positive elements of practices that had already been firmly established at their schools, while at the same time continually moving forward by effecting change. Bateson claims that in transitions all over the world, "the challenge to leadership is to make change tolerable by providing affirmations of underlying continuity" (p. 88).

Collyn and Lenore both operated from a deeply felt moral base, aspiring to do what seemed right for children and their learning. They held very definite personal beliefs and values that informed and governed their behaviour. As caring educators, they availed themselves to staff members, students and parents and were sensitive to the image they projected within the school community. Both principals incorporated, to different degrees, some playfulness in their manner, but they also clearly demonstrated their ability to make tough decisions. Reflection was considered by both principals to be an integral and continuous component of their leadership activities and one that helped them to broaden their learning and deepen their understandings. Collyn and Lenore were determined to find their own ways, and to this end, they ventured excitedly into the mystery, complexity, tension and uncertainty of their new positions.

Blurring the Edges

I have come to recognize, through my extensive reading in the area of school leadership, that the personal qualities, beliefs, aspirations and

committed efforts demonstrated by Collyn and Lenore, and revealed in the script, sound, and focus, are ones that are critical to the success of present day school leaders. But thinking about these components in isolation has not allowed for a viewing of the complete moving picture. The reality at each of the schools was that the principal's script, sound and focus were intricately interconnected and they played out on a landscape replete with a multitude of other scripts, sounds and focuses. Hart and Bredeson (1996) affirm that the "challenges faced by principals during succession are shaped within each setting." They claim, "to ignore these differences is to ignore the reality of leader succession in today's schools" (p. 164). When I soften my concentration on the parts and reflect on each moving picture in a more holistic sense, I perceive how two educators who arrived at their schools with similar goals, had, in the end, very different experiences.

I know that my own role in this research study, positioned me as an active participant in the unfolding of these succession experiences. Therefore, I believe it is important for readers to understand how my role evolved very differently on each of the school landscapes. Although my observations were continuous, my participation at each school was determined by the activities of each of the principals, the timing of my visits, the comfort level of other staff members and my own efforts to be included. As well, my relationship with each principal developed very differently, affected by our individual temperaments, the length of time we spent together and the surrounding circumstances during my visits.

I entered Kildonan School for my first visit accompanied by two policemen who were approaching the building at the same time. I was introduced and immediately accepted as a legitimate member of the team that had gathered to discuss the disappearance of two students during morning recess. Although the front office and hallways of this aged school appeared shabby, complete with dull walls and worn carpet, these physical features paled in comparison to the warmth exuded by the people. My instant inclusion in a critical school event promoted feelings of immediate acceptance and set

the stage for my further active participation at Kildonan School. Collyn encouraged me to visit the school regularly and the secretary greeted me like an old friend each time I entered the office. While there, I was involved in everything that was happening at the time, including meetings with parents, teachers and students. Collyn encouraged me to attend special events such as school assemblies and I was invited by the teachers to read to their classes during reading week. Throughout the year, Collyn and I walked in and out of all of the classes with ease, often stopping to work with students individually or to speak to classes as a whole. The teachers were welcoming and usually had comments to offer about what their students were doing. After my formal introduction to students as a safe adult to speak to, the students were very forthcoming with their stories. Collyn often reminded students on the playground, in her office and in the hallways about who I was, or the children themselves would inquire. Therefore, many of the students were able to address me by name, and I, in turn, came to know some of them by their names and many more by their faces. We also spoke often with parents and siblings in the hallways, at the school doors, and on the tarmac outside the school. Laughter was an accepted part of the interactions between all members of the Kildonan School community.

My first thoughts when I arrived at Eaton School were "quiet and controlled, organized and efficient." Although the hallways were empty, the main office was a hub of secretarial activity. There were several teachers and students in the office as well, but little attention was paid to my appearance. It was an older student who eventually inquired as to the purpose of my presence. My wait time, however, allowed me an opportunity to enjoy the clean, colourful and resource abundant modern environment of Eaton School. The cheerfulness of this atmosphere, however, was eventually off-set by the cool reserve of the people. During my visits, staff members were generally pleasant and a few of the newer teachers were quite friendly, yet I still found it difficult to relax. I attributed this partly to the larger size of Eaton School, and partly because I visited there less frequently due to calendar constraints and

Lenore's personal commitments. I often felt, and perhaps unfairly so, that my visits were scheduled in order for me to see a particular picture. Apart from one or two classes, I don't think the majority of students at the school ever really knew who I was or why I was there. Although I attended a parent council meeting and visited regularly with groups of teachers in the staff room, I was not included in meetings with individual teachers or parents, even if they happened during my visits. Lenore believed that the teachers would be uncomfortable with my being there, especially for the one on ones, which she did not discuss with me either. I was present at one meeting with students about a discipline issue but it was usually the vice-principal who dealt with these concerns. Initially, the vice-principal was cool and distant. But his attitude changed as the year progressed, possibly because of my on-going efforts to engage him in friendly conversation. Though Lenore visited every classroom on a regular basis, she did admit that she felt more comfortable walking freely into some classes than into others. Talks in the hallways were usually of an academic nature, and it was evident to me that this was a school where learning was taken very seriously. Yet I sensed a carefully guarded atmosphere, where teachers and students maintained their distance and kept to their classrooms. It was as if a thin veneer covered the surface of everything at this school and I was hesitant to touch. On the few occasions that Lenore and I met outside the school environment, she appeared more relaxed and spoke more freely. These visits proved very valuable in increasing my understanding of Lenore's experiences at Eaton School and in renegotiating my continued presence there.

I experienced Kildonan and Eaton Schools in very different ways. When I visited Kildonan School, it was like being in a too small house, where we were all on top of one another and we all ate in the kitchen. At Eaton School, I didn't get any more than a formal three-course meal and so I didn't have the opportunity to see the family in the same way. The different ways that I experienced each school affected the vantage point from which I viewed the unfolding of these succession experiences. This vantage point naturally

affected my perception of events and people, which in turn affected my interpretation of these experiences. I realize that just as no two moviemakers will ever film an incident with shots of precisely the same length, taken from precisely the same angles and distances, no two researchers will see people and events in exactly the same way. There are as many possible interpretations in each of these disciplines as there are moviemakers and researchers, and "none of us can see the whole or sing the whole... no one's picture is complete" (Greene, in Ayers & Miller, 1998, p. 145). The impressions I have related above and the understandings illuminated in the following discussion are my own, have been filtered through my beliefs and temperament, and have been influenced by my position at each of the schools. I firmly believe, though, that this subjectivity helps to create a depth from which more meaningful understandings about the succession experience emerge. Throughout the course of this research, I have tried to activate all of my senses, in particular to listen with more than just my ears and to observe with more than just my eyes. I wished to follow Forester's (1980) advice to pay attention "not to the sound of the person, but to the person of the sound" (p. 222). In doing so, I was forced to continually confront my own instinctive emotions, which I believe in a positive sense, served to maintain my excitement about the research, and my interest in the topic. Adjusting my interpretative lens, selecting the words, creating the images, deciding what to magnify or minimize, was performed with an immense feeling of responsibility to Collyn and Lenore to relate their experiences as truthfully as possible. Thus, I continually questioned myself throughout this writing, asking: "Why have I included this? What do I mean when I say this? How do I intend the reader to understand this?"

As I traveled between the two schools, I was continuously adjusting my lens from a close up view at Kildonan School to a more distant one at Eaton School. Thus my "filming" of each of these succession experiences was different. But as I rewind both films, to develop the yet unexposed parts of these moving pictures, I leave the school doors open and continuously slide

back and forth between them. I do this to probe the reality of the situations, to intensify the contrasts and to sharpen the differences created by the context. It is here that I suggest that the learning is most informative.

Double Exposure

As I have shown previously, Collyn and Lenore were two principals who held children in high regard. They focused their leadership lenses on issues surrounding teaching and learning and on creating a sense of community around people for the benefit of children. Similar efforts, however, resulted in very different succession experiences.

Both Collyn and Lenore wished to enhance the learning environment at their respective schools. Collyn was able to easily identify some major issues that required her immediate attention, while Lenore admitted that there were no obvious issues for her to attend to. At Kildonan School, Collyn concentrated her efforts on assessing the previous year's student achievement data, and monitoring, assessing, and evaluating the special needs of numerous students. Collyn noted a philosophy of caring at Kildonan School that she believed permeated teacher behaviour and had over time become the accepted school culture. Ironically, Collyn felt this philosophy was perpetuating what she believed to be the school's biggest problem—low student achievement. Collyn worried that teachers saw students' social backgrounds as an excuse to relax expectations for high levels of achievement and she firmly believed that the children had more potential than the test scores showed. Collyn determined that a philosophical shift in thinking was needed to focus attention and effort back on helping children to learn. She acknowledged, "I need to be the advocate of kids, that's my job. I need to have the teachers really think about what it is they're doing in that classroom and out on that playground." Lenore noted the excellent test scores at Eaton School and the sense of well being that permeated the atmosphere. To my knowledge, she did not question the

amount of growth achieved by the students to assess whether the teaching was having an actual impact on children who were potentially already high achievers. Lenore accepted assurances from the teachers that they were skilled professionals who performed their jobs well in a culture of expectation, achievement and competitiveness. Lenore confirmed that teachers at Eaton School "have high expectations for themselves and, therefore they keep themselves accountable." This competitive approach to achievement, though, did not completely match Lenore's sense of what she believed was important for kids. At Kildonan School, then, Collyn had direction and knew where she was heading. Eaton School, however, was a harder school to enter as Lenore endeavored to discover where she could fit.

Both principals initially focused on school assemblies as a way to begin, an entry point. They both envisioned monthly assemblies as a way to celebrate student learning. Collyn instructed the teachers at Kildonan School to implement student led assemblies every month with each class responsible for leading one of them. The teachers were given a choice as to which month they preferred. Collyn's strategy at Kildonan School worked, as the success of the assemblies snowballed. The students were excited about their performances, the teachers were eager to share their students' learning, and relatives and friends enjoyed watching and feeling a part of the children's school experience. There was such enthusiasm for these assemblies that they became a monthly focal point for the school community. At Eaton School, assemblies continued to be held for special occasions and Lenore eagerly volunteered her dramatic skills to participate in them. She believed, though, that time was needed for teachers to support the idea of more frequent assemblies. So she carefully planted the idea and waited for the seed to germinate.

Both Collyn and Lenore implemented professional development to build the capacity of staff members as well as to enhance their own learning. They both believed very strongly that improving teaching-learning strategies

and students' experiences in classrooms resulted in great gains for students. Collyn perceived a need to look critically at the academic program at Kildonan School and she suggested the curriculum alignment process as an effective way to accomplish the task. With a consultant leading the process, Collyn was able to participate in the principal component of the program. This course of action proved very successful as it engaged the teachers in thinking about their teaching without Collyn having to come right out and say that perhaps they weren't teaching the right things. This process was also sustained over a lengthy period of time, which essentially gave the teachers an opportunity to pick up the ball and run with it. At Eaton School, the teachers sent clear messages to Lenore that what they were doing in their classrooms was very good. Therefore Lenore did not discern a need for an on-going school wide professional development activity and adopted a more individual focus instead.

Both principals adhered to a person-centered leadership style and wished to establish productive relationships with staff, students and parents. Supporting staff members was a high priority for both Collyn and Lenore. Along with securing suitable instructional resources, they sought other ways to achieve this goal. Collyn effected improvements to the physical space at Kildonan School: the removal of a wall to double the size of the crowded kindergarten room, the cleaning and brightening of the front hall entrance and the main office, and the re-designing of the work space in the teacher preparation room. She also facilitated processes for helping the teachers and the secretary to improve their technical computer skills, and thus enable them to feel more competent in this area. Collyn's efforts were rewarded by visible appreciation from the staff. At Eaton School, Lenore received approval for hiring teacher interns to ease the burden of combined classes and for her support of an artist in residence program and a part-time computer technician. But she experienced resistance to her installation of a fresh water cooler and a coffee machine and to her proposal to accept student teachers. In order to advance a classroom audio system that she believed in, Lenore was obliged

to enlist one cooperative teacher's consent to try it with her class. Still, Lenore believed that staff members viewed her as reliable and responsible and she believed that that they felt supported. "If they ask me to do something I think they know it's going to be done and as quickly as I possibly can."

Teacher issues were continuous throughout the year at Kildonan School. Along with persistent new concerns, older issues, such as Kara's unhappiness about losing the counseling position and Zena's brusque personality, simmered below the surface and continued to manifest themselves in different ways. Collyn made herself available as a source of emotional support to staff members who were experiencing personal and/or professional difficulties. Her office was usually crowded in the mornings with staff members seeking advice, comfort or just wanting to talk. Although Collyn really cared about the well being of individual teachers, she was even more concerned about the impact of distressed staff on children in the classroom and believed that she could be of help by putting herself into the role of trusted advisor. At Eaton School, the teachers were more distant. They were either not burdened by major personal issues or they were more reticent about acknowledging them in their professional environment. Either way, Lenore did not come to know the complete context of her teachers' lives to the extent that Collyn did. From what little they revealed at school, Lenore reasoned that her teachers were able to successfully balance their own lives and that her role was to ensure that their professional needs were met.

Collyn spent a lot of her time getting acquainted with the students at Kildonan School. She regularly observed students in classrooms, discussed their achievement levels and helped to set appropriate goals for them. Collyn shared playground duties and she hung out often in the hallways and at the doors, addressing students by name, listening to their stories, offering them words of praise, hugs and loving reproaches. Collyn consistently put her administrative activities aside to attend to the needs of students, including searching the neighbourhood in the middle of a cold winter morning to locate a missing child. Students continuously paraded in and out of Collyn's office to

demonstrate their learning. While it seemed that children were everywhere at Kildonan School, the student traffic in the hallways and in the main office at Eaton School was minimal. Lenore met students in the classrooms, she met some while supervising the bus and others while coaching the running club but she did not have the continuous flow in and out of the office that Collyn had at Kildonan School. Lenore did not choose to assume some of the discipline issues, primarily looked after by the vice-principal, in order to interact more frequently with individual students. During my visits, Lenore spoke with students in the classrooms and in the hallways but she conversed more with the adults in the school. It seemed that the way the teachers structured their classes at Eaton School did not allow Lenore much opportunity to celebrate individual student achievement.

The Reel Story

At the beginning of this succession year, Collyn worried about being overwhelmed by the multitude of issues that faced her at Kildonan School, while Lenore thought of her assignment to Eaton School as a gift. Collyn, though, had a much easier time than Lenore in accomplishing her goals. Both principals were focused on enhancing learning and they both worked with teachers and could identify new practices that would benefit the students. The strategies that Collyn employed with the teachers at Kildonan School worked but I believe that Lenore's efforts did not advance as much as she would have liked . Even though Lenore didn't reveal that much to me, I couldn't help feeling that she was putting a brave face on a lot of things, that she alternated in her own mind that it was okay or that it was not okay, and that it really wasn't what she wanted it to be.

I believe Collyn's strategies worked because there were obvious issues at Kildonan School that needed to be addressed and most of the teachers there were open to changing. In the past, the teachers had diverted the notion of achievement tests to being irrelevant because they felt

that the students needed other things and thus they accommodated to a level that they thought the students could manage. But Collyn made it very clear that academic achievement was their focus and they would need to do whatever it took to raise student performance. Challenging teachers to believe in themselves and to raise their aspirations, Collyn pushed them to do better, and with her influence, the teachers became increasingly more motivated and more willing to take risks. These actions brought about positive changes in their skills and attitudes and subsequently the achievement levels of their students. But Collyn's involvement with staff members on a personal level also led to some discomfort. She found herself having to do things that she disliked doing, like eliminating the counseling position, insisting that an obstinate teacher apologize to a day care worker, and relaying a parent complaint to a particularly anxious teacher. Collyn also faced regular confrontations with staff members who just came to her and bluntly said, "I don't want to do this," "I don't like doing that," "you must do this," "you must do that." So although Collyn thought things were okay because there were many staff members who were very pleasant and complimentary to her, she mistrusted that pleasantry because she really was not sure. Collyn periodically wondered if she would get any positive comments from the teachers on the district questionnaires.

Lenore's transfer to Eaton School appeared ideal. Here was a principal in a professional community, who dressed very professionally, volunteered to help in classrooms and was willing to do anything to support teachers and students. But while I observed Lenore *in* the school, she did not seem a part *of* the school. In contrast to Kildonan School, there were no obvious issues about children's learning at Eaton School. Lenore concentrated her efforts on trying to get to know the teachers better and earning their respect. She spent recesses interacting with staff members and she used classroom opportunities to model teaching strategies. Lenore believed that the staff looked to her for confirmation that their direction was good and that she wasn't going to make any major changes in their school lives. However,

despite Lenore's assurances and her best efforts to be supportive, the teachers were somewhat defensive about letting her into their structure. The unfolding of the incident surrounding the staffing of the combined class, in a way left Lenore beholden to this veteran teacher, despite the offering of intern support. Lenore then focused her efforts on helping individual teachers, particularly the new ones, but she remained unsure about some of the others even with frequent visits to their classrooms. However, since most of Lenore's interactions with staff members were pleasant and professional, she put any uncertainties aside and was confident that the year was progressing exceptionally well. It took an anonymous note to put things into perspective for Lenore. She had felt so accepted by the school community that she was offended by the note and took it as a personal affront. Lenore wondered where this criticism could be coming from when she was trying to be as helpful and as nice as possible. However, after the initial hurt had subsided, Lenore realized that while some people might have liked the way she did things, there were others who clearly did not. Lenore addressed these concerns at a staff meeting to inform the teachers that she was aware of the risk she was taking when she requested feedback. But she assured them that even if she was wounded by the criticism or found some comments personally offensive, that she was prepared to take that risk. It seemed that although Lenore tried hard to work with the teachers at Eaton School, she kept bumping up against a strong existing culture.

Current school leadership literature reveals that principals are expected to focus on instruction (Murphy, 1998), coordinate resources (Morris, 1999), establish a climate conducive to cooperative and trusting relationships (Garubo & Rothstein, 1998) promote a collaborative school culture (Adams, 1999), build leadership capacity (Lambert, 1998), and be visible and available (Frase, Downey & Canciamilla, 1999). Both Collyn and Lenore supported these goals and endeavored to employ the necessary strategies to achieve them. But they also discovered that the comfort and success of past scripts proved very powerful and difficult to change. This

challenge was evidenced at Kildonan School with the situations involving the counseling position and the kindergarten teacher and at Eaton School with the espoused values of the teachers not always apparent in their practices. Collyn and Lenore were both forced to address these issues in order to ensure authentic professionalism.

From the experiences of Collyn and Lenore, I learned a number of valuable lessons. I learned that context is critical; that within each schoolhouse, context is multi-layered, composed of multiple moving interdependent scripts, sounds and focuses; that context incorporates place and person: the different levels of administrative hierarchy, the school, the community and the individual; and that context is unpredictable, with surprising fluctuations at every level; that you can learn from the literature but there are no guarantees that your learning will lead to success when you arrive at a school; that meaning is continuously shaped and reshaped throughout the succession experience, as you find ways to respond and adapt; and that after the actual experience you might arrive somewhere that you never anticipated. A story recounted by another principal illustrates the importance of context. During this principal's first succession, he moved into a situation where the staff did not feel there was much hope for the school. There were a great many difficulties, including a poor quality building and kids who didn't seem to care about learning. This principal made an enormous number of changes, all of which were heavily supported by the staff. Then, when he was moved into a suburban school, to a situation similar to Lenore's, he did something as minor as changing the carpet and the staff were upset that they hadn't been consulted about the colour.

This study taught me about the importance of finding a way that works; that the succession experience is not about doing things one way or another but is much more complex; that decisions made in one school could not have been made in the other; and that an open mind with the ability to admit to a lack of knowledge and the willingness to learn from mistakes, is vital. DeBlois (2000) advises that as leaders, "we should never forget the value of our own

ignorance" (p. 26). Finding a way that worked for Lenore meant offering a compromise to her staff after she received the anonymous note. Lenore requested that they accept and be tolerant of her style, and that she in return, would not force them to participate at staff meetings in activities that they disliked and would consider time constraints when planning these extra activities.

I also learned that you can make tough decisions and that things do not fall apart; that a painful boundary must be set at times between the personal and the professional; that you wouldn't be the first principal to worry about what staff members think of you and what they will say about you on the district questionnaires; and that it hurts to be rejected, to listen to negative comments and to receive anonymous letters. I learned that to some extent, you must learn to protect your heart or at least, as Thomas (1998) emphasized in his coaching analogy, to "keep your vital parts covered on a penalty kick" (p. 19). But more significantly, I learned from Lenore, that regardless of the hurt that may have been inflicted by what was said, it was still important to ask!

I learned about the value of patience and long term planning; that you may have to find ways to live with some of the things that you may not like; and that this first year of a succession is a learning experience, a preparation for the next year. Collyn's patient affirmations of faith in the abilities of those around her produced a hopeful optimism among staff and brought a renewed confidence back to the Kildonan School community. While Lenore's year may not have been all that she had hoped for, she still considered it successful. She confirmed to the staff at Eaton School that what they were accomplishing was just fine and that she wasn't about to upset their program with any major upheavals, that she was indeed harmless. Lenore told herself though, that she would continue to plant the seeds for change and nurture their growth. She believed that the teachers would be more relaxed during her second year at the school because they would know her better and thus their approach to her would be different. When that happened, Lenore was convinced that she

would be able to focus more of her efforts on curriculum leadership and getting to know the students better.

From this study, I learned about the necessity of developing your antennae so that you are able to activate your senses to be alert and attentive to the world around you at all times; about the need to be skilled at reading situations; about carefully monitoring the patterns you are developing and learning to see them through multiple reflective lenses; and about the importance of attending to relationships and understanding the changing nature of these relationships on a shifting landscape.

I learned about the importance of striving for a deeper understanding of self; that it's crucial to be aware of your own assumptions, values and beliefs because they shape and inform your thinking; that there will be times when you will have to negotiate and make decisions about issues that are not always black and white and that could have a substantial impact on other people's lives; and that you will have to ask yourself: Can I live with that decision? The decisions that Collyn faced at Kildonan School highlighted the challenges associated with finding a way to be consistent with your own beliefs while remaining open to listening to others, to grow and to change.

From this study, I learned that the difference between appearance and reality is not easily discernible; that there is always uncertainty when you live amidst strangers; that you don't always hear what you hope to hear or think you'll hear; and that reality bites but that hurtful comments and anonymous notes are not necessarily personal attacks, that you may have walked into a situation or stepped on something that you were unaware of.

I learned that the succession experience presents difficult yet compelling issues to explore; that the repercussions of these transitions are far reaching; that there are no tidy resolutions to succession stories and that definitive answers put limits on our understandings. Finally, I learned about the importance of opening up new questions about the succession process. Some questions that remain for me are: What is the best way to assess student growth during a succession experience? How different would these

stories have looked if Collyn had been placed at Eaton School and Lenore situated at Kildonan? What understandings do teachers, students, and parents have about principal succession? In what ways can we reflect on these and other succession experiences to allow for further insight into this phenomenon? Should principal succession be a frequent practice in school districts? Who should decide when the time is right for a principal to be moved?

I believe that the title of a recent film, What Lies Beneath, speaks to the way in which a closer look at two succession stories has exposed the depth of complexity in a succession experience, and deepened our understandings about this phenomenon. The insights gained and the questions remaining underpin the absolute necessity to continue to "lift the veil" (Ryan, 1999) on more succession experiences as they unfold within particular contexts, and to listen to the views of all participants. By revealing different ways of considering issues and other ways of doing things, these individual perspectives promote serious reflection, critical analysis and continuous dialogue, which can then translate to better decision-making and improved practices during succession experiences.

VII. Moving On: Pictures Within Pictures

When the lights in a theatre dim, the screen, once flat, dark, and motionless, brightens up to project a three-dimensional set that draws audiences into the motion of the story. Sobchack and Sobchack (1980) emphasize the importance of recognizing that "we cannot actually see some of the attributes of the story, which we nevertheless apprehend" (p. 170). They acknowledge one level of awareness that usually takes place while we are watching a film, and that allows us to understand automatically who, what, where and why. But they also refer to another kind of understanding and knowing that takes place after we finish watching a film, when we think about what we have seen in order to understand it. For me, the more I discuss the story in a film, the more meanings I discover. Similarly, succession stories communicate additional important understandings the more we replay them. These stories are powerful devices that engage us intellectually and emotionally and stimulate us to reflect on and learn from our own experiences. Through these stories, the complexity and interrelatedness of all of the moving parts within a particular context are revealed.

Thinking about watching traditional epic movies has helped me to understand the need for individual stories of experience. Epic movies are usually filmed from two different angles—one is the story on a macro level of the total picture and the other is on a micro level of individuals struggling to protect their own lives and the lives of their families. I believe that the large-scale scenes are important to witness in order to gain a sense of the larger world. However, I watch these scenes with a sense of detachment and indifference. It is only when the films allow me to become intimately familiar with individual characters, their families and the milieu in which they live, that I become emotionally engaged, and intellectually stimulated enough to consider the meanings presented in the film.

So this is my call for more stories from all members within a school community and at all levels of schooling, stories that will present accurate

descriptions of the realities of school life while providing greater insight into the way individuals think, what they think about, and how they connect their thinking to their actions. I agree with Coles (1995) that

> Conceptualizations and generalizations don't do justice to the human scene, to the ironies and ambiguities, the inconsistencies and contradictions and paradoxes that continually inform our everyday lives – which, after all, don't necessarily unfold in the linear direction dictated by this or that paradigm, but respond to accident and incident, to the unforeseen, the unpredictable, to luck, good and bad. (p. xiv)

Opportunities to share stories, especially for principals in transition, will serve to reassure them that they are not isolated in the challenges and the frustrations, as well as the joys that they experience.

Both principals who participated in this study relied on informal peer support to facilitate their transitions. School districts need to establish more formal ways for succession principals to dialogue and network. I suggest that school districts consider setting up more extensive mentorship programs to include not just first year principals but principals in transition as well.

School Districts need to be more committed to enhancing the success of principals in transition and to improving the means through which they are prepared and supported. School Districts should review and question the relevance of their succession policies, with more attention paid to why a principal is being moved. Is this move in the best interests of the school community? How is the match of a principal to a school best decided? Should the school community be involved in this decision? Has the succession principal been provided with as much information about the new school as possible? I recommend that School Districts consider an extended preparation time for principals who are changing schools. One idea would be for them to spend a week in their new schools in the spring prior to the move, without the current principals in attendance.

This is also a call for more collaborative research studies. The narrative reflective method used to elicit stories in this study encouraged principals to become researchers into their own practices. Both principals

valued this time for reflection on events, considering it important to their personal and professional development. They found the process of remembering past stories very satisfying as their present situations were frequently thought about, either consciously or subconsciously, in relation to these past experiences. Both principals also felt that their work was valued more by the larger education community through their participation in this research study and their contributions to knowledge in their field. I believe that the lengthy time that I spent observing, participating and conversing with the principals at their schools proved to be a critical factor in the gathering of thick, trustworthy data. I would encourage other researchers to arrange similar relationships for future educational research projects. According to Murphy (1999) "shared understandings of learning and organizations need to be in the foreground of efforts to craft better schools" (p. 6). However, I caution future researchers to invest considerable time questioning and reflecting on the ethical considerations surrounding their entry into a school and their subsequent role as a participant observer. This process of questioning and reflection should not only occur initially but should be continuous throughout the duration of the study.

I believe that it is vitally important for further research studies to examine the ethical challenges of qualitative research in schools. Some questions to address are: How can researchers acquire informed consent in better ways and from whom? Is it realistic for researchers to assure anonymity and confidentiality in an open and visible environment? If not, are there alternatives?

I strongly support the inclusion of succession stories in leadership training programs. Present and future school leaders must be prepared for the succession experience, which will be an inevitable part of their careers in today's educational climate. But I believe that it is not enough to simply read these stories. We must listen carefully with all of our senses alert to what these stories are telling us. We must "spirit" ourselves into the places of these individual principals. We must draw parallels and make personal connections

while at the same time distancing ourselves in order to reflect on a more rational level. We must learn to visualize through multiple lenses. We must try to think like they were thinking in their particular situations and we must continually ask ourselves, what we would have done in similar circumstances.

Although the screen has darkened on these two particular moving pictures, further layers of insights will emerge with each new story. And there are many succession experiences to learn from as yet another school year begins "again and again for the first time" (Michaels, 1996, p. 184).

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